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Management from the Nova School of Business and Economics.

INHIBITING AND STIMULATING FACTORS FOR THE INTEGRATION OF
REFUGEES INTO THE PORTUGUESE LABOUR MARKET

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A Psychological Perspective

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Inhibiting and Stimulating Factors for the Integration of Refugees into the Portuguese Labour Market – A Psychological Perspective

Abstract

Employment is considered a fundamental pillar of the overall refugee integration. From a psychological perspective, there are several factors that affect the refugees' labour market outcome. Following a dual approach, in-depth interviews with 2 psychologists and 13 Middle Eastern and East African refugees in Portugal were conducted. The analysis of the results indicates 8 key emotions, which dominate the refugees' psychological reality. Together with identified structural circumstances, these emotions affect refugees' mental health and thereby either stimulate or inhibit their integration into the society and labour market. The obtained findings have important implications for employers such as the Portuguese social business Mezze.

Keywords: Refugee Integration, Labour Market, Mental Health, Acculturation, Emotions, Structures

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List of Abbreviations

ACM	Alto Comissariado para as Migrações (High Commission for Refugees)
ARP	Autorização de Residência Provisória (Temporary Residence Permit)
CPR	Conselho Português para os Refugiados (Portuguese Refugee Council)
EU	European Union
IEFP	Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional (Portuguese Institute for Employment and Professional Training)
JRS	Portuguese Jesuit Refugee Services
SEF	Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (Portuguese Immigration and Border Service)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Glossary

Asylum Seeker	An individual seeking international protection, who has not been granted asylum yet.
Refugee	An individual who meets the eligible criteria to be granted international protection. Thereby, every refugee had been an asylum seeker before.
Migrant	An umbrella term, which is not defined / protected under international law, for individuals leaving their countries either voluntarily or forced. Economic migrants – individuals leaving their country solely for economic reasons – do not fall into the category of asylum seekers / refugees, who may benefit from international protection.

COLLECTIVE PART

1 Introduction

At a scientific level, the goal of this project is to identify inhibiting and stimulating factors for the integration of migrant refugees into the Portuguese labour market. In practical terms, the project is aimed at gathering evidence-based knowledge, which is intended to serve as the basis for the development of a future refugee training program for Mezze, a social business based in Lisbon by Associação Pão a Pão.

The group project is divided into a collective part and four individual parts. The collective part addresses two guiding questions, which precede the final research question, while the individual parts elaborate further on specific key themes related to refugees' labour market integration. These individual deep-dives are presented in separate documents, each authored on an individual basis by one of the four group members.

The two questions guiding the collective part are: 1) *What is the general context and how is the refugee situation in Portugal?* 2) *How does the acculturation journey of refugees look like?* These questions pave the path to finally identify: *What are the stimulating and inhibiting factors for refugees' labour market integration?*

First, the context in which this research project is embedded, is addressed by starting with an overview of the global refugee crisis followed by an insight into the refugee situation, specifically in Portugal. The paper focuses hereby predominantly on Middle Eastern and African refugees. In the next step, a sound understanding of the socialization and acculturation process refugees go through, is required. Thus, one of the fundamental acculturation models (The Berry's acculturation model in Berry 1997; Berry 2006) is discussed in more detail. Finally, concrete factors, influencing the integration into the Portuguese labour market, are identified.

2 The Context

The first guiding question of this collective part is aimed at understanding the context of this research project, which is the refugee situation worldwide, and more specifically in Portugal. With the civil war in Syria unfolding since 2011, Western countries suddenly faced a vast amount of humanitarian migrants within a relatively short period of time in the past decade. The spontaneous inflow peaked in 2015 and required immediate action on an international level. Portugal, an OECD country seeing relatively low numbers of humanitarian migrants in the past, was now facing tripled numbers of asylum seekers between the years 2014 and 2017. (OECD 2019) Historically, migration inflows in Portugal stemmed mainly from Brazil, former Portuguese colonies on the African continent and Eastern Europe. With the humanitarian situation in Syria and neighbouring countries worsening, Portugal was now required to grant international protection to asylum seekers from Middle Eastern countries. The term *asylum seeker* is defined as “an individual who is seeking international protection“ by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR 2013). Once asylum is granted, the individual is considered a *refugee*.

Integrating refugees into a completely new country, culture, economy, and society with a different language, a different set of beliefs and values, and a different legislation has proven to be an extraordinarily complex task. There are multiple influencing intertwined factors which either contribute to or hinder integration. One of the main challenges in fully integrating refugees lies in the access to the host country’s labour market and the quality of employment opportunities available. According to the EU-wide *Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy*, determined in 2004, “Employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible.“ (Council of the European Union 2004, 19). Without employment, refugees remain dependent on third parties and cannot become financially independent and economically contributing members of the host society. Non-

employment can further affect individuals' motivation, well-being and social inclusion in a negative way, and refugees' talent and skills remain unutilized potential. (ILO 2016)

All over the world, various public, private and non-profit organizations are trying to tackle this exact challenge, one of them being *Associação Pão a Pão*, a non-profit organization in Lisbon, Portugal. With the establishment of its restaurant project *Mezze*, the association strives to facilitate labour market integration of refugees by offering employment opportunities and training, with the latter one being intended to evolve into a more structured and scalable model in the future. The restaurant *Mezze*, located at Mercado de Arroios, Lisbon, was established in 2017. Born from a conversation with a Syrian student, the idea of creating a Middle Eastern restaurant came as a way of giving refugees in Lisbon the opportunity to have a workplace where they would feel 'at home', using food as a bridge between refugees and the local Portuguese community. Currently, *Mezze* does not only function as a restaurant, but also hosts different workshops on Mediterranean food to the public and provides catering services. As of 2020, *Mezze* has already provided 37 beneficiaries¹ with an employment opportunity. The *Mezze* project has been recognized as an example of success in the integration of refugees by important national figures, such as the Prime Minister António Costa and President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, as well as the former European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship – Dimitris Avramopoulos. In 2018, *Mezze* was further honoured as the *Figura do Ano na Gastronomia* by the *Congresso dos Cozinheiros*, one the most important annual events amongst the Portuguese restaurant industry, and won the social entrepreneurship award from both the *Groupe PSA Foundation*, and the Julia Taft Grant under the refugee aid category (*Mezze by Associação Pão a Pão* 2020). In the future, *Mezze* is

¹ Despite being offered this opportunity, some beneficiaries only stayed with *Mezze* for the trial period. This data was provided by the founders of *Mezze* (November 16, 2020);

planning to develop and implement a well-founded, structured training program, which is intended to function as a scalable model and best practice example within the hospitality sector, that could be replicated industry-wide to increase the overall social impact.

2.1 The Refugee Crisis in Portugal & Europe

During the last decade, at least 100 million people were forced to leave their homes and start over due to violent conflicts, war, and persecution. This forced displacement was triggered by different crises, including the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, the conflict in Ukraine, the outflow of Venezuelans across Latin America and the Caribbean, safety concerns in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Somalia, amongst other defining events. The following paper will be focused primarily on the integration of Middle Eastern refugees as a result of the Syrian crisis triggered by the civil war in 2011. (UNHCR 2020).

With attacks increasing every day, families started to flee the country seeking safety and by 2013, over one million people had left Syria. From 2011 to 2019, the number of forcibly displaced Syrians increased to more than double (from 634 000 to 13 230 000). (UNHCR 2020).

2.1.1 Current Situation Worldwide

As of 2019, 80 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide, from which around 26 million are refugees. (UNHCR 2020).

The top five countries from where refugees have fled in 2019 are Syria, reporting 6.6 million people hosted in more than 126 countries worldwide, followed by Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. (Figure 1)

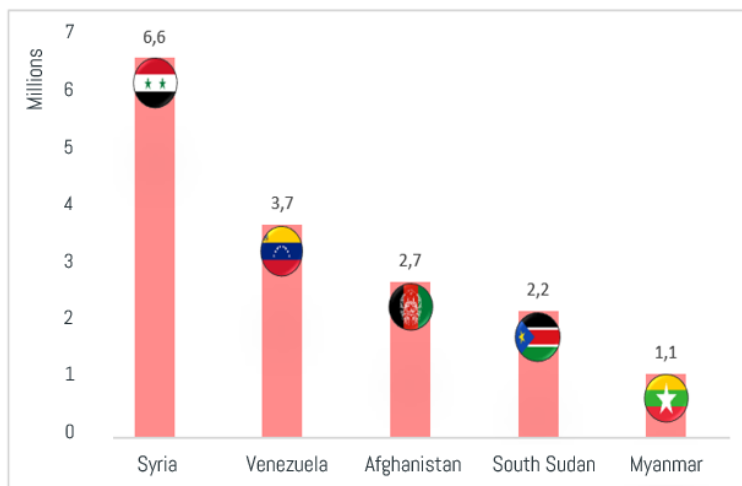


Figure 1: Top 5 countries of Origin for Refugees in 2019. Source: (UNHCR 2020)

Regarding the countries of destination, Turkey secures the

first place, having hosted 3.6 million refugees in 2019, following Colombia, Pakistan, Uganda and finally Germany, with 1.1 million refugees. (UNHCR 2020) France and Sweden occupy the second and third place in the EU top refugee host countries in 2019. (Statista 2020)

Despite not being the main destination among EU state members, Portugal has been experiencing a significant increase in the number of migrants and refugees in the past decade. In 2019, there were 3 430 forcibly displaced people in the country (compared with 610 in 2011), from which 2 375 were refugees and 1055 asylum seekers. Most refugees arrived from Syria (accounting for 22%), followed by Ukraine, Angola, Eritrea, and Iraq. Male refugees accounted for 68% of all refugee population in Portugal. (UNHCR 2020)

2.1.2 Process of Integration in Portugal

Concerning the integration process in Portugal, there are two possible migration journeys: one for spontaneous asylum seekers and refugees and another one, since 2015, for asylum seekers under the EU-schemes. In both systems migrants start by filing a request for international protection with the Portuguese Immigration and Border Service, called *SEF*. While waiting for the decision on the request, which can take up to one month, the Portuguese Refugee Council, *CPR*, is in charge of supporting the spontaneous asylum seekers by hosting them in its reception centre (*CAR*) or in private housing. In addition, Portuguese language training as well as

professional workshops are provided during this period. Once the waiting period is over, and if the request is admissible, the asylum seeker receives a temporary residence permit (*ARP*). This permit is valid for 6 months and needs to be renewed until *SEF* communicates the final decision on whether refugee status or subsidiary protection is granted, or any kind of protection is denied.

Regarding refugees under the EU-Schemes, a hosting entity is immediately assigned, after submitting the request for asylum. This match is done by the High Commissioner for Migrations (*ACM*) based on the background of each refugee and the hosting entity that oversees the integration program, which typically lasts 18 or 24 months. The main entities to host asylum seekers under the EU-Schemes are the Refugee Support Platform, *PAR*, and *CPR* and are responsible for the integration along five different areas: housing, health, language, education, and work. (OECD 2019)

3 Journey of Acculturation

After defining the context and situation, in which this research is embedded, the second guiding question is explored, by examining the acculturation journey that refugees undergo.

The integration of refugees into the labour market of a host country represents one key pillar of the overall integration. Therefore, in order to evaluate inhibiting and stimulating factors for the labour market integration from a theoretical perspective, the overarching processes that refugees go through during their settlement in a different country have to be studied. Among them, the acculturation process stands out as one of the most glaring and appropriate within this context. However, in order to discuss acculturation, it is important to first understand the general concept of socialization.

3.1 Socialization

According to William Little (Little 2014), socialization is the process through which people are taught to be proficient members of a society. It describes the ways that people come to understand societal norms and expectations, to accept society's beliefs, and to be aware of societal values. Despite this process being very dependent on the norms and traditions that are passed on from an individual's parent/guardian, Maccoby argues that it does not mean that newer generations will not adopt different social structures and social behaviours (Maccoby 2015). Through her work, socialization is defined as "a succession of processes occurring at successive stages of development", with the family, peer groups or schools being identified as the main agents during the process. These studies on socialization are crucial to the project, as they highlight how similar the concepts of acculturation and socialization are. However, there is one main characteristic of the process of socialization that highlights why acculturation should be the focus of the theoretical analysis: Socialization is the transition from the initial stage in the development of an individual to the final stage. The process implies a slower transition from stage to stage, caused mostly as the individual matures and gets older. However, asylum seekers experience a sudden transition when they are forced to travel to a new country. In this situation, the adaptation to a completely different culture with its norms and values is provoked by the involuntary transition, rather than a natural transition. Nevertheless, socialization is an important concept for the following studies. Depending on the stage of socialization and thereby the age of a refugee when entering the receiving country, the acculturation process unfolds differently. In a study on Chinese immigrants in Canada, Cheung et al. found that "people are better able to identify with a host culture the longer their exposure to it, but only if this exposure occurs when they are relatively young" (2011, 147). Berry came to a similar conclusion in regards to migration during the early childhood years. He attributes this phenomenon to the absence of a manifested primary culture, which reduces the need for

extensive cultural shedding and thus avoids **cultural conflict**. (Berry 2006) On the contrary, Fathi et al.'s research suggests that adolescent refugees for example are much more vulnerable to the changes related to acculturation. In this stage, individuals are transitioning from childhood to adulthood, and still building their identity, for which “belonging to a peer group” and “good social relationships” is crucial (Fathi, et al. 2018, 2). Consequently, the **age** of an individual can be both a stimulating but also an inhibiting factor for integration. Whether a refugee enters the acculturation journey during childhood or as an adult, affects the course and nature of both processes – socialization and acculturation. Therefore, socialization and acculturation can be seen as two interconnected processes, taking place simultaneously.

3.2 Acculturation Process

When cultural aspects, which are learned through the initial socialization process in one's country of origin, encounter the culture of another country, a process called *Acculturation* is initiated. The concept of acculturation dates back to antiquity and was first discussed by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato. (Plato 1969) Nowadays, the most widely used definition of the term originates from Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits: “*Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups*” (1936, p.149). Although this definition suggests that both groups may be subject to change (bidirectional influence), criticism has arisen in the past due to the interchangeable use of the two terms, *acculturation* and *assimilation*. As assimilation implies that one group is expected to adapt to the other group's standards (unidirectional influence), the acculturation term obtained a negative connotation over time. In order to maintain the neutral nature of the concept, current research suggests to refrain from using assimilation as a synonym,

which is taken into account for the present paper, whenever the term *acculturation* is used. (Berry 1997; Sam and Berry 2006; Teske and Nelson 1974)

According to Berry (1997) the acculturation process, which is initiated through one's exposure to a foreign culture, triggers changes on two distinct levels: on a group level and on an individual level. Thus, acculturation can be divided into *socio-cultural acculturation* (group-level) and *psychological acculturation* (individual level), the latter term being mainly coined by the research of Theodore Graves. (Berry 1997; Searle and Ward 1990; Graves 1969) These processes are further influenced by whether individuals are subject to acculturation by choice (e.g., immigrants) or involuntarily (e.g., asylum seekers, refugees); by whether individuals are shifting physically to encounter a new culture or are confronted with a new culture without changing their location (e.g., indigenous people); and by whether the cultural encounter is temporary (e.g., exchange students, guest workers) or permanent (e.g., immigrants). (J. W. Berry 1997)

3.2.1 Berry's Acculturation Model

When it comes to a transition, such as the one asylum seekers and refugees are exposed to, two major factors are relevant to determine the course and outcome of acculturation, namely *home culture maintenance* and *host culture acquisition*. Both terms stem from Berry's research, originally defined as *cultural maintenance* and *contact and participation*, and are adapted for the present paper, which presents the model from a refugee perspective. *Home culture maintenance* thereby describes the extent to which the preservation of the refugees' original cultural identity is desired, while *host culture acquisition* refers to the extent of their willingness to adapt to the host country's culture and to engage in it. In 1997, Berry developed a bi-dimensional framework along those two dimensions (Figure 2), which also became the foundation for several of the recent acculturation models and theories. (J. W. Berry 1997)

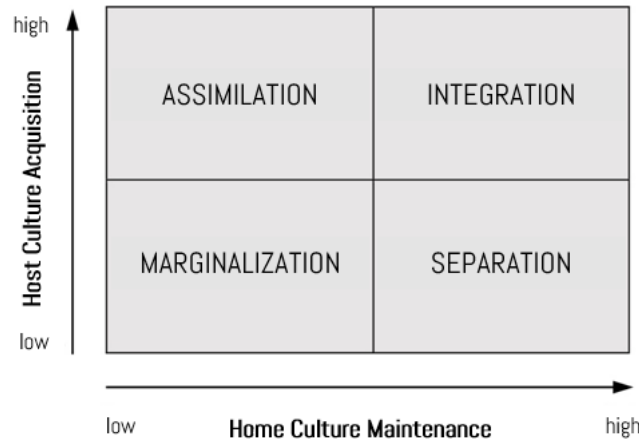


Figure 2: Berry's Bi-dimensional Acculturation Framework, adapted from Berry (1997)

The fourfold model distinguishes four different acculturation strategies which individuals and groups pursue during their acculturation process: • *Assimilation* refers to the strategy of adapting to the newly encountered culture, while shedding one's home culture. These two simultaneous processes are also referred to as *culture learning* and *culture shedding* in the literature. (J. W. Berry 1992) • *Separation* represents the opposite strategy, where individuals hold on tightly to cultural habits, values, and norms of their home country, while refraining from cultural learning in respect to the host country. • *Integration* takes place when individuals are adopting cultural aspects of the host country while at the same time maintaining their original cultural identity. • The fourth acculturation strategy is *Marginalization*. In this case, refugees are neither acquiring parts of the host culture nor preserving parts of their home culture. (J. W. Berry 1997)

As previously discussed, acculturation is considered to be a bidirectional process, where both, the dominant (host society) and non-dominant group (incoming refugees) are exerting influence on each other. Therefore, it is important to note that Berry's model can and should also be utilized to evaluate the dominant group's perspective. This is crucial, as the host culture plays a major role in whether the individual is able to pursue the 'chosen' strategy or not. Berry

argues that refugees “*may well be constrained in their choice of strategy, even to the point where there is a very limited role for personal preference*” (J. W. Berry 1997, 12) due to certain **pre-conditions in a country** (e.g., national policies; levels of diversity, racism, etc.). Further, it is important to mention that acculturation is considered to not be static but rather an evolving process. Therefore, the strategy an individual or group pursues may change over time.

In the past, Berry’s model also received criticism, mainly regarding its simplistic nature. The four categories are often found to be too generalized, as they do not allow to capture different nuances of acculturation strategies. (Rudmin 2009; Schwartz, et al. 2010) However, the simplistic nature of the model might be what contributed to its popularity within the acculturation research. Nowadays, the four acculturation strategies of Berry serve as a basis for many of the latest, more complex acculturation frameworks. (The MITA in Fathi, et al. 2018; The MIDA in Safdar, et al. 2003; The RAEM in Navas, et al. 2007) In the following work, Berry’s model is applied and used to categorize the empirical findings collected from refugees and the civil society of Portugal. The following questions are addressed: Which acculturation strategy are refugees in Portugal predominantly following? and Which position is adopted by the Portuguese society?

4 Introducing Integration Factors in the Portuguese Labour Market

To achieve complete and successful integration, it is key that refugees are granted full access to the labour market of the host country. According to a 2017 analysis published by the European Commission, there are several factors which contribute to a lower employment rate amongst refugees in the host country, compared to the native-born population. Bearing in mind that this analysis uses data from 2014, before the peak of the refugee crisis in 2015 (see appendix A), the variables influencing the employment rate of refugees the most, are **the time**

of residence in the host country and the **host country language skills**. **Education** influences this rate as well, yet not to the same extent. (Peschner 2017)

With respect to the Portuguese labour market, the unemployment rate is measured at 6,5% in 2019, not far from the EU-27 average (6,7%). Women displayed a rather high unemployment rate compared to men (7,1% against 5,8%). (Pordata 2020)

Regarding the refugees' access to the labour market, Portugal is amongst the OECD countries with the smaller **waiting period** to receive the ARP, at around 1 month only (see appendix B). As of November 2018, almost half of all asylum seekers and refugees under the EU-schemes were either employed or in training. (OECD 2019)

Integration in the labour market is, as with the native-born population, more challenging for women than for men, making **gender** also one inhibiting factor for women. Most refugee women arriving in Portugal under the EU schemes claim to have no prior work experience outside their households and the education level tends to be low. Only 5% of both male and female asylum seekers have received tertiary education. (OECD 2019)

In Portugal, several other challenges, which are acting as inhibiting factors in regards the labour market integration, stand out. The first one concerns the **language**. As shown previously, knowing the host country's language is a major advantage for every refugee to be properly integrated into the host society and succeed both personally and professionally. In the Portuguese situation, the language courses offered by *IEFP* sometimes do not open due to lack of students, and the few alternatives available lack time and structure for a refugee to properly learn the language. (OECD 2019) Thus, the language factor can be either stimulating, when successfully learnt and used as a bridge for communication and integration, or inhibiting, in the case that refugees and asylees do not speak the host country's language and never become integrated to the full extent, leading to their marginalization or separation (figure 2: Berry's model).

Following, the **recognition of foreign skills** poses another hurdle. This challenge arises as most refugees do not bring their diplomas to the host country and, without proper documents, their skills and qualifications are not recognized, which inhibits their ability to find a job corresponding to actual capabilities and literacy. (OECD 2019)

Finally, refugees and asylum seekers face several obstacles related to **employers' perception of refugees** combined with **legal issues**, when looking for job opportunities, which also represent inhibiting factors for labour market integration. In Portugal, there are a few initiatives from ACM to facilitate the matching between refugees and employers such as *Mentors for Migrants* or *Refujobs*. However, hiring a refugee is still seen as a risk for several companies, mainly due to the legal procedures required to work in Portugal and the **uncertainty** of not knowing for how long the refugee or asylum seeker will remain in the country. (OECD 2019)

4.1 Entrepreneurial Attitude: Ethnic Entrepreneurship

Another factor stimulating the integration of refugees into the labour market is the **attitude** and the **ability to achieve self-employment**. It can be defined as entrepreneurial character, and because of its relevant outcomes in the labour market, the factor is going to be explained in more detail. Refugees often belong to ethnic minorities, who are more likely to suffer labour discrimination in the host country because of poor language skills, unrecognized education and qualifications, or just by being considered as outsiders with respect to the host community. This combination of “push” factors has made entrepreneurial activities an alternative way to make use of personal resources to get out of unemployment and into better socio-economic integration (Wauters e Lambrecht 2008), that would reflect their true skills, qualification and knowledge. Ethnic entrepreneurship can be defined as the self-employment of people belonging to minorities and having a culture different from that of the host country. (Chad and Ghorbani

2011) Several studies show that entrepreneurship rates are often higher among foreigners than natives, and that entrepreneurs coming from minority ethnic groups, like refugees, are generally more successful. (Waldinger, Aldrich and Ward 1990) This is probably due to the fact that they are **less risk-averse**, have better opportunity perception, and are more confident about succeeding in a new and unfamiliar environment (Levie 2007), especially since their migration's decision has been involuntarily and influenced by the fear for personal safety. Moreover, because of the **different background, knowledge**, and the heterogeneity they bring into the economy, ethnic entrepreneurs may also trigger radical innovations with respect to the host country's standards. (Acs 2006) Despite legal and language challenges, refugee entrepreneurs may also have important competitive advantages, especially in the service industry, more specifically tourism and hospitality, which represents the most attractive area for refugees to venture. It requires less capital, less know-how, and ethnic entrepreneurs can have access to a low-cost co-ethnic labour force. (Portes and Jensen 1989) Nevertheless, one of the main barriers to the entrepreneurial success of refugees is the hostile political environment in many host countries, where local communities blame refugees for depressed wages, lack of jobs, and increased crime rates, hindering the integration process. (Mulvey 2010) But since refugees' chances and willingness, to return to their homelands are very limited, especially in cases like Syria where there is little hope for solutions in the short term, it is in the governments' best interest to facilitate integration into the host society, labour market, and economy. Refugees who do not have access to the labour market are forced to rely on the welfare system of the host country. At the same time, refugees are involuntary migrants who sometimes even come from middle and upper-class backgrounds, being consequently well educated, resourceful, adaptable, and independent. Thus, supporting refugees' entrepreneurial aspirations is important not just to assure their socio-economic advancement, but also because successful entrepreneurs will no longer be dependent on governments' aid, and will enhance

the welfare and economic growth by creating jobs for both locals and refugees. (Alrawadieh, Karayilan e Cetin 2018)

4.2 Social Support and Mental Health

Two further key variables, which affect the outcome of an individual's acculturation process and thereby one's integration into the labour market, are **perceived ingroup social support** and **perceived outgroup social support**. Both variables are worth mentioning, as they are not only included in Berry's acculturation model (figure 2) but also in more recent and complex acculturation frameworks such as the *Multidimensional Individual Difference Acculturation Model* by Safdar et al. (2003) and the *MITA Model* by Fathi et al. (2018), which build onto Berry's acculturation strategies.

Ingroup support hereby refers to the perceived social support from family and friends from the ingroup (e.g. same ethnic minority, country of origin), whereas outgroup support considers the social support originating from the host society.

According to both above-mentioned models and several other studies, these factors can both have a stimulating or inhibiting effect on the refugees' integration in the labour market: the availability of social support can not only significantly lower **acculturative stress**, even when individuals had been exposed to **traumatic events**, but also facilitates the coping with challenges related to a bi-cultural surrounding (Safdar, et al. 2003; Fathi, et al. 2018; Jerusalem et al. 1996). However, the absence of this support can also aggravate the feeling of loneliness and lead to the deterioration of refugees' mental health. Both factors, in-group and out-group social support, have significant effects on a refugee's **mental health**, which again influences the overall integration. Thus, in-group and out-group support play a key role in the acculturation process and therefore also deserve consideration in the context of refugees' inclusion into the labor force.

4.3 Language Socialization and the Language Barrier

Since the **language** barrier is considered one of the main obstacles for the integration of refugees into the labour market, the concept of language socialization has been examined in more depth in this paragraph. Not being able to speak the local language is not just a barrier to accessing the labour market, but it can also be a major factor for preventing proper integration, culturally and socially speaking. Nevertheless, most countries offer language training program upon arrival that permit to obtain social and communicative competence, raising attendees only to the poverty line, and not allowing to achieve technical proficiency, which is necessary to thrive in the upper and middle class. Indeed, competence refers to understanding the use of language in determinate situations, and this is enough to navigate the welfare system and get employed within a blue-collar job. But to access higher positions in the social and work hierarchy, a more complete academic and technical knowledge of the language is needed.

This is where language socialization plays a crucial role, defined as a lifelong process that takes place when a person seeks some level of proficiency in a language other than their mother tongue in order to engage in social and community practices by Duff (2012). This process can be facilitated through specific programs, like for example reception and placement classes offered by Catholic Charities in the US, which teach individual norms, customs, and cultural habits of the host country exclusively in English. The reason why language socialization is a fundamental factor for integration is that it permits to go beyond the basic language skills for survival and self-sufficiency and allows to increase social mobility in the host community and job market, since language proficiency is a core asset that increases employability. (O'Connor 2014) Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the second language and the second culture, referring to the host country's ones, are inextricably linked. The culture and the habits of a community influence the accent and the way a dialogue develops, and this

is why language socialization processes should include also cultural teachings to allow new learners to fully integrate with the host community. (Kelley 2014)

5 Summary of Integration Factors and Introduction of Individual Deep-Dives

Examining the leading question about the *inhibiting and stimulating factors for the integration of refugees into the society and labour market*, the following factors were identified so far:

Stimulating Factors for Integration	Inhibiting Factors for Integration
Younger Age (at Arrival)	Older Age (at Arrival)
Favourable Conditions in the Host Country	Hostile Conditions in the Host Country
Access to Good Language Courses	Poor Language Skills
Time of Residence in the Host Country	Long Waiting Period to access Labour Market
Education	Gender Inequalities
Recognition of Foreign Skills	Employer's Negative Perception of Refugees
Entrepreneurial Mindset	Legal Issues
Ingroup and Outgroup Support	Future Uncertainty
Mental Stability	Acculturative Stress & Trauma
Different Knowledge	Cultural Conflict

Table 1: Stimulating and Inhibiting Factors for the Integration of Refugees into the Society and Labour Market

According to these findings and taking into consideration the group member's individual areas of interest, four key themes related to refugees' labour market integration were identified, which will be explored further within the individual parts:

- Associação Pão a Pão and Mezze's role in fostering the integration of refugees in the Portuguese labour market and how they plan to strengthen their operations.
- Out-group social support: The Portuguese context and the role of the Portuguese community.
- The psychological perspective: The role of refugees' mental health in the labour market integration. What are the psychological challenges and is Mezze tackling them?

- Global best practice examples: Which practices are implemented and which of them can be adopted by Mezze?

INDIVIDUAL PART: A Psychological Perspective

In the preceding part, several stimulating and hindering factors for the integration of refugees into the Portuguese labour market were identified. In this second part, the focus is placed on the psychological perspective and thereby predominantly on refugees' mental health, affecting the integration. To examine the topic further, a qualitative research study was conducted.

1 Problem Statement and Introduction to the Study

“Despite the number of refugees and asylum seekers around the world increasing at an astonishing rate, the mental health needs of migrants are often ignored by policy makers and clinicians.“, argues Professor Dinesh Bhugra (2021), who is conducting research on migrant psychiatry, a subdiscipline of cultural psychiatry. As the migration of refugees is rather abrupt and forced instead of voluntary and planned, these groups are especially vulnerable in terms of mental health. According to Echterhoff et al. (2020), those on the run oftentimes take greater risks and put themselves in life-threatening situations in order to seek protection, which has lasting effects on refugees' mental condition.

Besides these psychological difficulties related to pre-migration experiences and the migration journey itself, existing literature also associates post-migration experiences such as the exposure to acculturative stress with poor mental health. (Berry et al. 1987) *Acculturative Stress* is hereby defined as a stress response, which results from conflicts related to the clash of two distinct cultures. When the *cultural conflict*² becomes too overwhelming for the subject and extensive *cultural shedding*³ is required, individuals' mental health suffers. (Berry 1997) Regardless of where the psychological difficulties originate from, mental health conditions can affect the labour market integration of refugees, as they “inhibit the ability of individuals to

² *Culture conflict* = “where incompatible behaviours create difficulties for the individual” (Berry 1997, 13)

³ *Cultural shedding* = „the unlearning of aspects of one's previous repertoire that are no longer appropriate“ (Berry 1997, 13)

cope with an unfamiliar environment by disrupting the acquisition of new skills and establishment of social contacts” (Brell, Dustmann and Preston 2020). Contrary, the access to “new opportunities to flourish” (employment) acts as a protective factor for refugees’ mental health, while the unavailability of such opportunities (unemployment) represents a risk factor. (WHO 2018) Further studies confirm this connection between mental health and employment. Interviewing African refugees, Wood et al. (2019, 1) found that “both employment and volunteering held direct positive benefits for their physical and mental health, improved healthcare access and promoted cultural and social integration“. Another study amongst 98 adult asylum seekers in Australia by Hocking et al. (2015, 28) showed that „unemployed asylum seekers were more than twice as likely to have major depressive disorders“. However, a large-scale survey across Swedish-born, immigrants, and refugees with 51,118 participants found evidence, that poor mental health outcomes due to unemployment are equally likely across participants, independent from their ‘status’. (Sidorchuk, et al. 2017)

In summary, literature has shown, that an individual’s mental health condition⁴ can either be a stimulating or an inhibiting factor for labour market integration, while the employment status⁵ can also either improve or worsen the mental health condition of a refugee. Thus, the psychological state constitutes not only a pre-condition that influences the labour market outcome. The ability or inability to obtain employment also influences the psychological outcome of an individual. This interdependent relationship between employment and mental health emphasizes not only the importance and complexity of the mental health topic related to migration but also its need to be subject of further research.

In previous research, several psychological hurdles for integration were identified, which stem from either pre-migration, migration, or post-migration. However, a more holistic

⁴ Depending on its nature: whether poor or stable mental health condition;

⁵ Depending on the status: whether employed or unemployed;

perspective on integration is required, which unites influences resulting from all of these stages. Therefore, this project seeks to advance the existing knowledge through the analysis of psychological insights and refugee stories captured by the conducted qualitative fieldwork. By taking on a refugee perspective, the focus is shifted towards individual experiences and emotions connected to these experiences, trying to make sense of refugees' psychological reality. As a result, the study aims to gain valuable insights, derive implications, and provide guidance for employers, such as Mezze, on how to facilitate the integration of refugees.

Thereby, two questions are addressed: 1) Which factors are inhibiting or stimulating the labour market integration from a psychological perspective? 2) Which conclusions can be drawn from this regarding recommendations for Mezze?

2 Methodology

Data Collection: For the purpose of this research project, primary data was obtained through qualitative research. According to Ormston et al., qualitative research aims to provide “an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world, by learning about people’s social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories” (2013, 23).⁶

Following the *Grounded Theory*, purposive sampling, a sub-type of non-probability sampling was used. Study participants were recruited via Mezze and refugee organizations until theoretical saturation was reached. According to the founders of the Grounded Theory, Strauss and Glaser (2017, 61), “saturation means that no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the category. As he sees similar instances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated”.

⁶ Comparing it to quantitative methods, Leung (2015, 324) states, “*While human emotions and perspectives from both subjects and researchers are considered undesirable biases confounding results in quantitative research, the same elements are considered essential and inevitable, if not treasurable, in qualitative research as they invariable add extra dimensions and colours to enrich the corpus of findings.*”

Striving for a diverse sample, interview participants from different genders and nationalities (Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Eritrea) were selected. Additionally, to increase the validity of the data and to gain a dual perspective, both refugees (internal perspective) and psychologists (external perspective) were consulted. The sample consists of 13 refugees from the Middle East and Eastern Africa and 2 psychologists from the Portuguese refugee organizations CPR and CRESCER, who were each given an identification code (see Appendix C). In regards to the participating refugees, all informants are currently living in Portugal and arrived between 1 and 5 years ago. However, only 2 out of the 13 refugees chose specifically Portugal as a country of settlement, whereas the remaining 11 were assigned to the destination. The age, of those disclosing it, ranges from 26 to 50. Furthermore, 12 out of the 13 involved refugees were employed at the date of the study participation.⁷

The data of this study was extracted from semi-structured in-depth interviews with an open-ended response format. The assurance of anonymity was intended to allow participants to respond in a more intuitive way and elaborate further on personal experiences. All interviews were held either in English, Portuguese, or Arabic, with the latter involving an interpreter. Responses were documented through a mix of audio recordings and field notes, as in certain cases, audio recordings were not permitted due to the sensitivity of the data.

Data Analysis: As noted above, the study was designed according to the Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 2017), which aims at developing theory in a bottom-up process. In this inductive approach, theories and explanations evolve from the emerging patterns, and are tested and adjusted until theoretical saturation is reached. (Bernard 2011) The same procedure was adopted for the data analysis of the present study. In the first step, the interview observations

⁷ It is important to mention that this representation is biased, since several participants are current employees of Mezza and Amal Soap and had been specifically reached and selected based on this criterion. According to the OECD, “As of November 2018, 48% of asylum seekers and refugees of the EU relocation scheme aged 15 to 64 were either employed or in training” (2019, 31) in Portugal.

were grouped into **first-order concepts** via open-coding. In the next step, these concepts were consolidated into **second-order themes** to investigate relationships between concepts and themes. From there, two **aggregated dimensions** were conceptualized. (Strauss and Corbin 1990) Hence, by identifying patterns among the observations, individual experiences evolve into more abstract generalizations throughout the process.

Limitations: In regards to the data collection two limitations became evident throughout the sampling process: First, the availability and choice of subjects were limited due to the sensitive nature of the required data and the language barrier existing between students and refugees. Second, the ability to establish contact with refugees in person was restricted by social distancing regulations in regards to Covid-19, which made online interviews the only option to continue with this research project. Consequently, conducting exclusively in-person interviews is considered as a variable that could have increased the depth of the research.

3 Results

In order to present the obtained results, the data were classified into three columns according to the grounded theory methodology, generating a graphical representation of the data structure. The findings presented in the first column of Figure 3, are recurring, direct observation stemming from the conducted interviews (see transcripts in Appendix E), which are grouped into first-order concepts. Similarly, through the interpretation of these findings, the first-order concepts are consolidated into 15 categories – dominant emotions and variables of structural nature - as shown in the second column. Finally, two overarching dimensions aggregate the second-order themes. The two dimensions distinguish the internal perspective (*Emotional Level*) from the external perspective (*Structural Level*) and will be discussed in the next step.

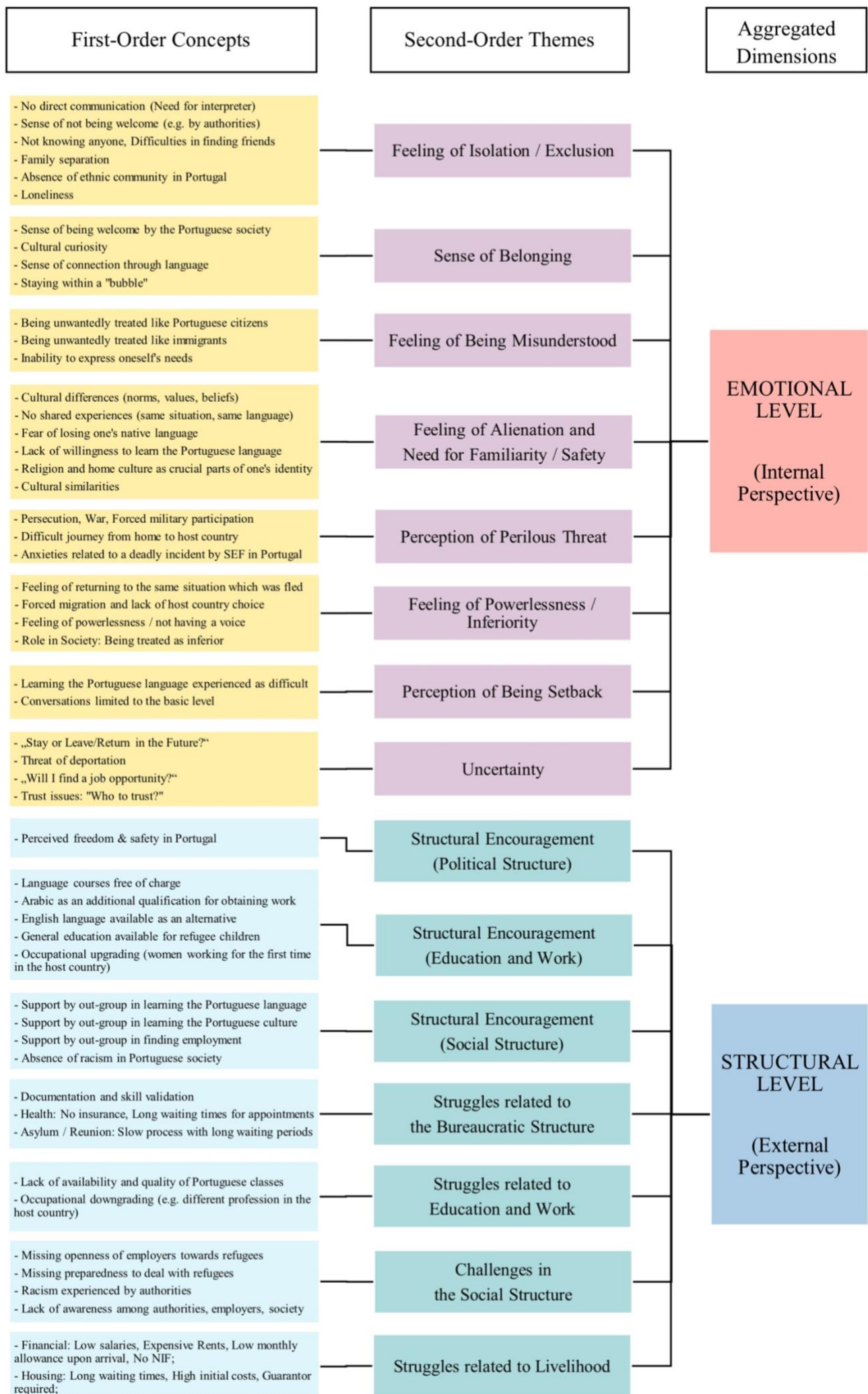


Figure 3: Data Structure according to Grounded Theory

4 Discussion

In the following, categories of both levels, the emotional and the structural, are discussed in more depth and subsequently reflected upon in relationship to one another.

Feeling of Isolation and Exclusion: The feeling of isolation and exclusion presents one of the recurring observations found amongst the interviewees. An apparent and widely discussed source of this emotion is the language barrier between refugees and the host society, as it impedes direct communication. (Taylor 2004) During the interviews, the language was named as one of the difficulties refugees have to deal with by 10 out of the 15 participants. One questioned psychologist stated, *“The language is the first relation with the new country. If you don’t have that, it will be much more difficult”* (P2). Asking refugees about whether they feel part of the Portuguese community, one responded: *“I feel integrated but not too much. The language is important to integrate, and I miss having more Portuguese friends that can teach me the culture”* (P12).

The feeling of isolation and exclusion can further stem from the sense of not being welcome, from not knowing anyone, the experience of loneliness, and the difficulty of finding friends. Hereby, the absence of an in-group⁸ stands out in particular, as more than half of the sample arrived alone in Portugal. Family separation is considered to have a great impact on the refugee, as “for many people, the family will be their strongest form of support and should be recognised as this” (The British Psychological Society 2018). One participant stated: *“I haven’t seen my family for almost 6 years. (...) They also would like to come to Portugal, but it is very complicated”* (P4). One psychologist gave another example to illustrate the impact of family separation: *“I work with one male refugee here in Portugal. His wife and kid are still in Syria. His wife doesn’t know how to read or write. So, it’s hard to explain to her the whole journey, how she can come to Turkey and then to Portugal. As a result, this man now suffers from mental difficulties”* (P1). In

⁸ In-group = Family, friends, other nationals from the same country of origin;

addition, being asked about the thing they miss the most from their home country, 7 out of the 13 refugees replied *"my family"*. However, not only the absence of family but also of an ethnic community was mentioned as a reason for feeling isolated. One statement by a refugee couple emphasized the connection between this emotion and the need for familiarity and safety: *"It is very important that not only you get along with locals that respect you, but it is also essential to share your day-to-day with people in the same situation you are in. (...) We miss talking with other Syrian people"* (P3, P4).

Sense of Belonging: In a study among 1,408 refugees and immigrants in Canada by Beiser and Hou (2017), the sense of belonging to the host country's society was found to be a predictor for positive mental health. According to the collected data, this sense of belonging may be evoked from learning the language and connecting through it, from the Portuguese society's welcoming mentality⁹, or the refugees' cultural curiosity. However, younger refugees may experience a greater sense of belonging, as one refugee woman describes: *"I don't know many Portuguese people (...). My kids, on the other hand, have Portuguese friends and speak Portuguese well"* (P13). This relationship between age and sense of belonging was also confirmed by another refugee couple (P3, P4) as well as in the collective part. The desire to belong to a group may also be satisfied by staying within a closed circle of in-group contacts, which limits interactions with the host country and thereby inhibits the social and labour market integration of a refugee. (P1)

Feeling of Being Misunderstood: Some refugees feel misunderstood, as they are unwantedly treated like immigrants (P8) or Portuguese nationals (P9). One participant stated: *I'm a refugee, so please treat me as a refugee. I came to Portugal with empty pockets. Portuguese people have money, work, everything. They can look after themselves, but I cannot, I just came* (P9). In others, the same emotion of being misunderstood is evoked by the inability to express one's needs, for example,

⁹ At least 62% of the sample indicated to feel welcome.

due to a language barrier: *It's hard to explain what I want. I want to ask for information about something and I'm not able to* (P11). Explaining feeling misunderstood further, another interviewee states:

The Portuguese government, the municipality, and also CRESCER, they do not understand what we need. (...) I didn't come here for money, I'm here for better opportunities, I want to study, to learn how things work, so I can do a good job and take my road. (P8)

Feeling of Alienation and Need for Familiarity/Safety: This feeling represents another dominant emotion found in the interview data. Many displaced people experienced tremendous material and immaterial losses due to war, persecution, and their following escape. In search for familiarity and safety, they look out for cultural similarities between their home culture and host culture or hold on tightly to their culture of origin, including the associated norms, values, and beliefs. These actions can be considered a defence mechanism to avoid the loss of one's culture, which is often the only thing a refugee has left from his/her home country. If everything, which seems familiar, is removed, refugees may feel alienated from their cultural identity. During the interviews, participants referred to cultural similarities between their home and host country, which were perceived to reduce the need to change. (P3, P4, P6, P9, P14) Contrary, when cultural differences prevail, refugees often feel alienated. A couple explains:

We have 5 kids, 3 are Syrian and 2 are Portuguese. They are all at school at the moment. They are in fact too well integrated within the society. Since the kids came here at a young age, they want to be Portuguese and adapt to the Portuguese community, while we still have strong ties to our Syrian heritage, which creates generational shocks and makes it sometimes difficult for us and the children (P3, P4).

In addition, different views on the role of women, sexual orientations, illegitimate children, the present and the future (time perception), the father-son relationship, and substance use were mentioned and described as unfamiliar or difficult to cope with (P2, P8). From a psychologist's perspective, *"for most Muslims, it is important to maintain their religious traditions. Not having the freedom to maintain these practices makes refugees feel excluded, unsafe"* (P1), which also demonstrates a connection between the feeling of alienation and the feeling of exclusion. According to another interviewed psychologist, the feeling of alienation and need for familiarity

is also reflected in some refugees' lack of willingness to learn the Portuguese language, as they fear losing their native language and thereby their identity. (P2)

Considering the need for familiarity and safety, shared experiences play another crucial role. *"The process is easier to go through if you have a family waiting at home experiencing the same problems or a group of friends that are there to support you and not feel alone in a different country. It makes the process easier, speeds up the integration, and reduces acculturative stress"*, argues (P1), a psychologist at CRESCER. A female refugee confirms this: *You will always feel like a stranger. (...) When I have to talk about something particular, I prefer the Arabic ones, because we have lived similar experiences, and we are closer, like sisters* (P14).

Perception of Perilous Threat: Another recurring pattern linked to emotions was identified in the data, namely the perception of perilous threat. Oftentimes trauma is the result of being exposed to life-threatening experiences such as war, persecution, and forced military participation (*pre-migration*). However, trauma can also stem from the acculturation process itself taking place *post-migration*. In this context, previous studies have found mental health to be a predictor of refugees' labour market integration outcome. (De Vroome & Van Tubergen 2010, Ruiz & Vargas-Silva 2018) Traumatic experiences *during the migration* were mentioned by several members of the sample. (P3,P4,P8,P9,P13) One participant states:

We crossed seas, we passed mountains, we passed all the danger. (...) I've seen death. (...) I've left my country inside a casket. I hid inside the casket for 18,5 hours just to pass a little part. People were shooting me. Lots of people have been killed in front of me by different groups. I crossed the sea, people died with me in my boat. I was in hell in some parts (P9).

However, the perception of perilous threat may continue even post-migration, as illustrated by one specific incident from March 2020: A Ukrainian man, arriving without a valid visa, was beaten to death by SEF officials at an airport detention centre in Portugal after refusing to leave the country (Demony and Waldersee 2020). *"I didn't pass all that way to come to the same situation. (speaking agitatedly) I've passed all of that to have a different life, not to be afraid"* (P9).

Feeling of Powerlessness and Inferiority: Besides the above-described perception of inescapability, the sense of not having a voice, being treated as inferior, as well as the inherent forcedness of refugees' migration contribute to the overarching feeling of powerlessness. 11 out of the 13 interviewed refugees did not choose Portugal as their country of settlement, but were assigned there. One refugee states, he would have preferred Germany since parts of his family were already settled there. (P6) Another respondent emphasizes: *"I cannot go back to my country because I'm a politic refugee. If I go to my country, it is impossible to come out of it again"* (P15).

Feelings of inferiority and being voice-less, were also observed in previous research (Kristal-Andersson 2000) and reflected in the conducted interviews: *"No one is willing to listen to you. Refugees are not being heard. They don't allow you to speak. (...) I've been told: 'You have no right to claim your rights.'"* (P9). This perception of inferiority, when internalized, may influence the social and labour market integration by a lowered self-esteem, decreased self-confidence, or the perceived lack of opportunities, and is connected to the previously discussed feeling of exclusion and isolation. For example, in the case of the ethnic minority *Buraku* in Japan, "practices and attitudes of inferiority become part of the Buraku's identity" (Degawa 2001), as they unconsciously internalized experienced discrimination and prejudice.

Perception of Being Setback: Several interviewees experienced setbacks when learning the Portuguese language, as they found the learning process to be difficult. In addition, as conversations are often limited to the basic level, respondents further indicated that certain desired positions in the labour market are not accessible for them (cf. *Occupational Downgrading* in Struggles related to Education and Work).

Uncertainty: Another key emotion accompanying refugees' lives is considered to be uncertainty, which can stem from various sources, one of them being the threat of deportation. One of the 13 interviewed refugees, who arrived in Portugal over four years ago, reported to have been waiting for a final decision from court regarding potential deportation for 2 years:

I don't like to talk about the future, because no one knows what's going to happen tomorrow. Especially me, because I seriously don't know. Because I'm waiting for a decision from the court if they will allow me to live or to die. (...) In the court, even the judge himself, they say: "He should be deported to his country, but if he is deported, his life is at risk, in danger." (...) So, now I'm focusing on how to live, not to die. (P9)

The statement illustrates how uncertainty can hinder an individual from focusing on his/her future and indicates signs of immense psychological strain. The direct relation between higher levels of distress/ decreased life satisfaction and uncertainty in regards to a refugee's legal status was also confirmed by another large-scale study with 4,325 adult refugees in Germany. (Walther, et al. 2020) Furthermore, according to a study by Barbelet and Wake, uncertainty not only impacts refugees' mental health but also influences most of their choices as well as their ability to achieve personal long-term objectives (2017). This was also reflected in the conducted interviews when asking the participants whether they plan to stay or leave in the future:

- *To be honest, I still don't know, I am still searching for opportunities to stay here in Portugal. If I don't find work, I see myself leaving Portugal. (P5)*
- *For now, we plan to stay in Portugal, but we do miss Syria and plan to return once the situation becomes more stable. We haven't seen our family in 6 years, and we want to be reunited. (P4)*

Contrary, uncertainty about the length of the stay "may deter employers from considering persons with a more temporary status, including when considering investing in their upskilling and training" (OECD & UNHCR 2018, 10). Another type of uncertainty, the uncertainty of who can be trusted, as a consequence of trauma, represents an additional inhibiting factor for refugees' labour market integration. A psychologist from CPR outlines,

"Trauma affects every relation to everyone. There is even a lack of trust in people they encounter every day - like us from CPR. Thus, it is even harder when they have to deal with people they don't know, like new colleagues, a new boss at work, etc." (P2).

Structural Encouragement (Political Structure): After mapping out the emotions, which dominate the lives of refugees, recurring observations on a structural level are discussed. In regards to the political structure, the perceived freedom and safety in Portugal appears to encourage the integration, as emphasized by an Eritrean refugee:

I see myself living in Portugal [in the future]. My life is good right now and life is too difficult in Eritrea. (...) I feel more free here. I can choose what I want to do here. Back in my country, I would be forced to work for the government (P7).

Structural Encouragement (Education and Work): In regards to education and work, certain existing structures in Portugal such as the availability of Portuguese language courses free of charge facilitate the integration of refugees. At least 69% of the refugee sample stated to have participated in a language course. The wide acceptance and use of English as an alternative language for communication in the private and professional environment was perceived as another stimulating factor for integration by 46% of the study participants with migration background. The recognition of Arabic language skills as an additional qualification further stimulated the labour market inclusion of one refugee in the sample: *My Arabic language supported me a bit. Because in Teleperformance I was working with some projects that needed an employee who speaks it natively (P15).*

Different standards related to education and work may also have positive effects on an individual's labour market outcome. For example, different norms can enable female refugees, who have never worked before due to cultural reasons, to access the labour market in the host country. This phenomenon of *occupational upgrading* was experienced by two female interview participants, who have never been employed before. (P11, P13) Nevertheless, as addressed in the collective part, accessing the labour market still proves more difficult for refugee women than men. This is explained by the lack of education and work experience of Middle Eastern women, as they are often not allowed/expected to work due to cultural reasons.

Struggles related to Education and Work: More common than the above-described phenomenon is *occupational downgrading*¹⁰, which represents an inhibiting factor of labour market

¹⁰ To avoid subjectivity bias, occupational downgrading in this context was defined as a situation where a refugee, who was originally studying/working towards a different or higher position, is now working in a field different from his/her field of expertise, and thus cannot make use of his/her previous knowledge.

integration. 11 of the 12 interviewed refugees, who are currently employed, are working in an area different from their original field of expertise¹¹. Explaining variables for this pattern represent the absence of certificates, the non-recognition of skills acquired in the home country, as well as the insufficient knowledge of the Portuguese language. (OECD 2019, ILO 2016) The lack of language skills is further amplified by the temporary unavailability of language courses, long waiting times, and the lack of quality as reported by the sample.

- *I wanted to learn Portuguese as soon as possible, but they told me I had to wait - wait for what? And then they gave a language course of 150 hours, that is not enough to really learn it! (P8)*
- *They started from 'high words' and it was difficult to understand. So, I quit. (P15)*

Structural Encouragement (Social Structure): On the structural level, members of the Portuguese society were found to be a great support in learning the language and culture (P5, P10), finding employment (P3, P4), or helping with financial issues (P8). In addition, the absence of racism in the social structure was explicitly pointed out and associated with an increased sense of belonging by 6 out of 13 refugees, participating in the study.

Challenges in the Social Structure: Despite the reported absence of racism within the Portuguese community, discrimination and prejudice were still experienced by refugees on the part of authorities involved in the asylum process (P9). Linking structural factors to emotions, existing literature found a connection between the experience of racism and a lowered sense of belonging. (Fozdar & Torezani 2008, HREOC 2004, Labelle 2004)

Another major obstacle for integration, according to both interviewed psychologists, is the general lack of awareness of refugees and their needs among the society, authorities, and employers. (P1, P2) The latter ones are often *“not prepared to deal with refugees”, “have this ‘maybe next time’-mentality”* and *“prefer to stay in their comfort zone”* (P2).

¹¹ 2 of those 11 have never worked before and are thus also considered as working outside their ‘field of expertise’.

Struggles related to the Bureaucratic Structure: From a psychological perspective, struggles related to the bureaucratic structure such as lengthy and complex asylum processes are directly related to refugees' mental health (Hvidtfeldt, et al. 2020, Mueller, et al. 2010, Hallas, et al. 2007), and thus their ability to integrate, as those psychological wounds take time to heal. Long waiting times for the final decision, if temporary or permanent residence is granted, represent a major structural issue and is highly connected to the feeling of uncertainty.

I would love to change the public services. Because the bureaucracy is eating us all. (...) They are people who need to live, who need to feel free. (...) There are refugees waiting for 2 years, sometimes more than 2 years, to get a decision. That's really bad, that's even torture for refugees. Because of that now, many percent of the refugees need a psychologist, no - a psychiatrist. You have no idea what does it mean to be waiting for something and you don't know what is it or what's it going to be. They are just waiting for nothing. (P9)

The same problem applies to the process of family reunion, as two participants stated to have waited up to three years to be reunited with their wives (P6, P8). Long waiting times and high efforts to access primary health care were further mentioned (P9, P12). In particular regards to the labour market, documentation and skill validation are two additional key factors related to bureaucracy inhibiting the integration of refugees (e.g. *I didn't bring any documents so cannot prove my educational background (P8)*).

Struggles related to Livelihood: The ensuring of human rights and coverage of existential needs represents the basis of integration. (cf. Appendix D and UNHCR 2010) 46% of the refugee participants mentioned difficulties related to housing and financial issues. During the interviews, several factors, which were perceived as challenging, were repeatedly recorded: the lack of work opportunities, low wages, and insufficient financial support from the government.

They were giving us salaries, it was really difficult to live with it. It was 150€. (...) It was difficult in the beginning but when I started work, things got easy. Now I'm comfortable. (P15)

This statement highlights again the importance of labour market integration, as it eliminates existential threats and thereby contributes to the overall integration.

In regards to housing, participants reported difficulties in finding a place to live, especially after initial aid programs ended. Identified obstacles were expensive rents, high

initial costs, as well as the common requirement to provide a Portuguese guarantor, which can prove impossible for refugees who are not in regular contact with the Portuguese community. Those struggles are again connected to the emotion of uncertainty.

4.1 The Interconnectedness of Factors and Emergence of Dilemmas

The discussion indicates that emotional and structural layers are highly connected and influence each other to a great extent. This interconnectedness is illustrated by one specific example:

Participant 9 was able to obtain employment, although in a field different from his original profession. The subject experienced a great *sense of belonging* through the Portuguese society and Portuguese friends. Furthermore, he acquired basic Portuguese language skills and indicated to have adapted easily to the Portuguese culture due to cultural similarities. Nevertheless, despite being a member of the labour market, the overall integration of this individual cannot be called successful. This can be justified by certain variables of the emotional and structural level, found in the data: First of all, war, the life-threatening journey, and family separation experienced by P9 suggest the pre-existence of trauma and manifested in the *perception of perilous threat* and *feelings of isolation and exclusion*. Post-migration and related to the *social structure* in Portugal, P9 experienced racism by authorities involved in the asylum process, which evoked the *feeling of powerlessness, inferiority* and *being misunderstood*. These feelings were further amplified by struggles related to the *bureaucratic structure*. In addition, the incident of an Ukrainian man beaten to death by SEF officials at Lisbon Airport in 2020, was perceived as another *perilous threat* by P9. Last but not least, P9 is currently facing potential deportation, which is associated with a high level of *uncertainty* and represents another reason to refrain from calling this individual's integration successful. (see Appendix E for full transcript)

Despite P9 being an individual observation, the case exemplifies the interconnectedness of factors and demonstrates that integration is not merely dependent on one specific factor such as language or social support but rather on the interaction of multiple factors on an emotional and structural level. Furthermore, the example highlights once again the importance and relevance of the mental health topic in regards to the question: *What can employers like Mezza do to promote integration?*

4.1.1 Model of Interconnections between Emotions and Structures (MIES)

To generalize and visualize the described cross-level relations, a model (Figure 4) was developed, which highlights three specific dilemmas.

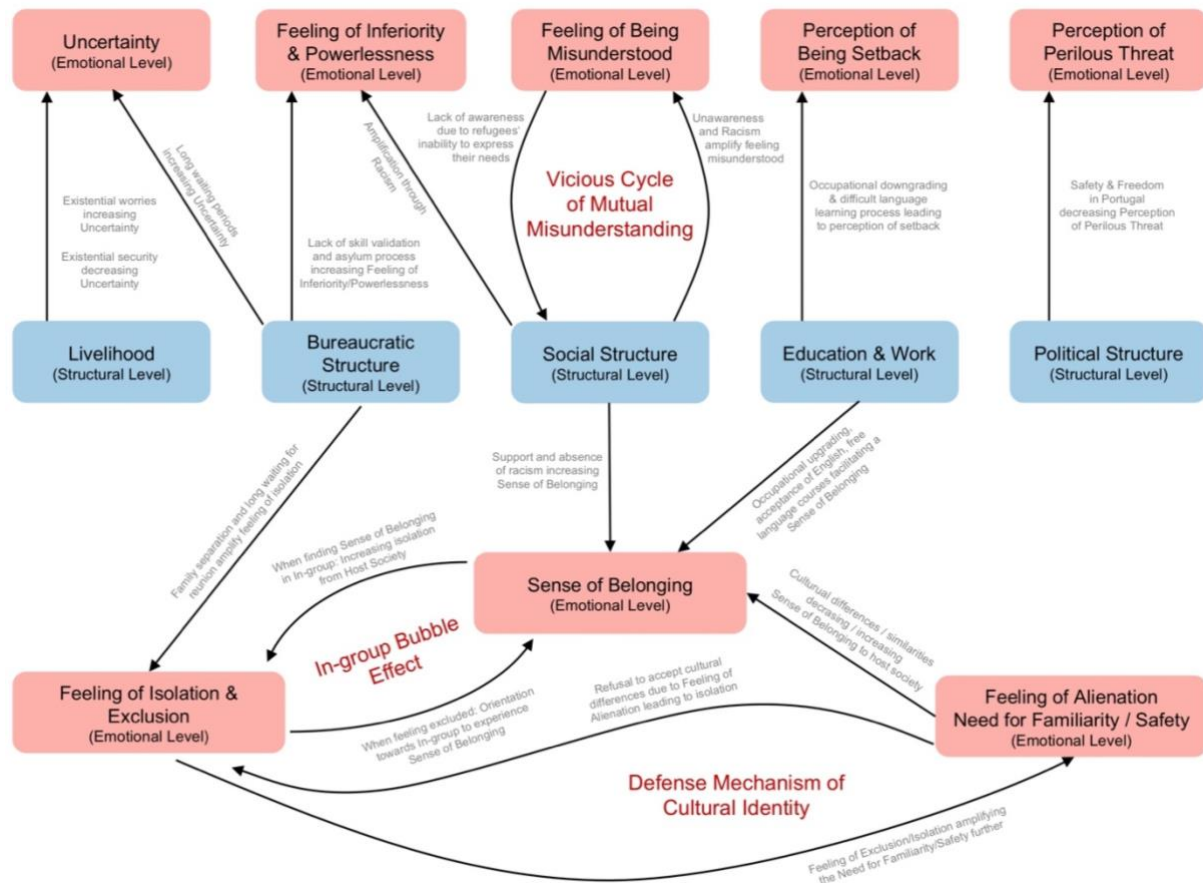


Figure 4: Model of Interconnections between Emotions and Structures (MIES)

The *In-group Bubble Effect* occurs when refugees satisfy their desire to belong to a social group by remaining amongst themselves. Through solely experiencing a sense of belonging in their in-group, they continue to isolate and exclude themselves from the host society. Once feeling excluded, individuals may tend even more towards searching for a sense of belonging within their in-group.

Another dilemma represents the *Vicious Cycle of Mutual Misunderstanding*. Hereby, racism or unawareness on the part of the host society, authorities, and employers amplify the feeling of being misunderstood in refugees. On the contrary, refugees are literally misunderstood. Due to the existing language barrier or trauma, for example, refugees find themselves unable to express their needs, which in turn inhibits an increase in public awareness as well as the elimination of prejudice.

Defence Mechanism of Cultural Identity-dilemma: When feeling alienated from one's original culture and identity due to cultural differences in the host country, individuals may

refuse to accept or adapt to these differences, which leaves them feeling excluded from the host society. Meanwhile, the feeling of exclusion increases the need for familiarity and safety, which is often found in one's own culture. By holding tight onto one's original cultural norms, values, and beliefs, individuals may feel even more alienated, when being continuously exposed to a different cultural reality.

4.2 Berry's Acculturation Framework applied to Findings

Finally, referring back to the collective part, Berry's acculturation framework is applied to the obtained data on refugees' psychological reality, in an attempt to approach the question of *which acculturation strategy are refugees in Portugal predominantly following*. The data suggests that the majority tends towards an integration strategy. However, deviations towards assimilation and separation were observed. Taking into consideration that certain answers were left blank, unintentionally or on purpose, by some participant, at least 62% of the sample feel welcome, 85% interact with Portuguese people on a regular basis, 38% explicitly mentioned that they did not have to leave parts of their culture behind (home culture maintenance), 92% started learning the local language to adapt to their environment (host culture acquisition), and 38% explicitly mentioned similarities between their home culture and the Portuguese culture, which lowers the degree of required cultural shedding in order to be integrated.

Only 31% indicated to not feel part of the Portuguese community or only to a limited extent. Furthermore, 4 out of 13 respondents mentioned certain cultural differences they do not agree with or are not used to (Separation tendency). Additionally, 31% emphasized the absence of an ethnic community of their country of origin in Portugal, which complicates the preservation of home culture, traditions, etc., especially when they arrived in Portugal alone (Assimilation tendency). Despite these deviations and some expected degree of cultural conflict, the observations suggest that integration is preferred by the majority of the sample and thereby the acculturation strategy striven for. Multiple statements support this, for example:

- *I accepted the Portuguese culture because I am living here with more Portuguese people and they have accepted me as well. (P7)*
- *I can do anything here. I don't feel like I am forced to change parts of myself to live here. (P6)*

4.3 Research Limitations and Outlook

Finally, concerning research limitations, it proved difficult to separate observations related to the labour market integration from those related to the overall integration into the society and culture due to the high level of interconnectedness. This can be justified and illustrated by multiple examples: First of all, regular interactions with the host society may lead to the establishment of friendships and professional relations, which constitute one possibility of finding employment. Some of the interviewed refugees entered the labour market in this way (e.g. P3 and P4). Furthermore, members of the host society can also be a great support in learning the local language, which not only increases the chances to obtain work but also the prospects to access better job opportunities. Hence, in this study, labour market integration is not viewed detached from social integration.

During the research, it became evident that the first contact of refugees with their host country, their arrival, and the following period, has far-reaching consequences for the integration into the society and the labour market. Existing literature and the conducted in-depth interviews confirmed that general processes need to be modernized, speeded-up, and improved to create a better starting point for integration. As this thesis' focus was on the labour market inclusion, examining the root causes of certain failures in the general and labour market integration is out of the scope of this paper but represents a possibility for future research.

5 Recommendations

The preceding discussion provides a basis for recommendations. In specific regards to Mezze, three recommendations, addressing the dilemmas found in the *MIES* (chapter 4.1.1), are given.

Dilemma	Recommendation
<i>In-group Bubble Effect</i>	By creating adequate structures and evoking a sense of belonging in refugees towards the Portuguese society, the formation of encapsulated in-group bubbles can be prevented and feelings of exclusion from the host country decreased. In concrete terms, instead of occupying the training program solely with refugees, Mezza is advised to create a ‘platform’ for interactive learning by involving Portuguese students and professionals from the hospitality sector as program partners. Through this continuous exchange, all parties are expected to learn from each other and to work together, and the creation of in-group bubbles in the work environment (and possibly beyond) is prevented.
<i>Vicious Cycle of Mutual Misunderstanding</i>	The vicious cycle can be broken by raising awareness for displaced groups and their needs amongst the Portuguese society. This can be achieved through empowering refugees to speak up to share their stories and problems with the out-group (e.g. at regular event series, workshops, or visits at educational institutions). By educating the Portuguese society, prejudice can be reduced and mutual understanding is fostered. In addition, feelings of inferiority and powerlessness may also be reduced. In this context, eliminating the language barrier plays a crucial role. Thus, extensive language training should be one of the key pillars of the program, to empower refugees not only to express their needs but also to access further education and better work opportunities after the program.
<i>Defence Mechanism of Cultural Identity</i>	To achieve a better understanding of cultural differences and to reduce feelings of self-alienation, intercultural training is advised to be part of the program. Further, refugees should be given access to psychological support , to provide aid on how to cope with acculturative stress and identity-problems related to cultural clashes, and to promote full integration into the labour market and society. In addition, it poses the possibility to start processing even deeper-seated trauma. Psychological support can be enabled through a permanent and independent contact person (e.g. social worker, psychologist), who visits the workplace on a regular basis and is familiar with the individual’s work context. By not talking to a supervisor, the fear of losing one’s job as a consequence is eliminated.

Table 2: Individual Recommendations

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, by taking on a psychological perspective, the paper highlights the importance of employment, and thereby the relevant role of employers such as Mezza, for refugees’ psychological well-being and overall integration. Instead of only identifying specific challenges for the labour market integration, a different perspective on inhibiting and stimulating factors was adopted, by focusing on *how these challenges are perceived by refugees themselves* and

which consequences are emerging from these perceptions. The analysis points out relationships between emotions and structural barriers/facilitators, which exist in Portugal, and thereby proposes starting points for interventions.

Nevertheless, the data suggest that there is still a long way to go. Thus, future research should further investigate the relationship between structures and emotions, and thereby continue to focus on psychological aspects, as they play a crucial role in the labour market and overall integration. Even though this research project was predominantly carried out in regards to the refugee crisis related to Middle Eastern conflicts, it is presumed that these integration challenges only mark the beginning of a greater global, continuous trend, as 200 million people are projected to be displaced and in need of protection each year by 2050 due to the progressive climate crisis. (IOM 2008) Thus, integrating refugees into new societies, economies, and labour markets will become even more important. In order to facilitate the best societal and economical outcome for all parties involved, conducting further research on this is highly recommended.

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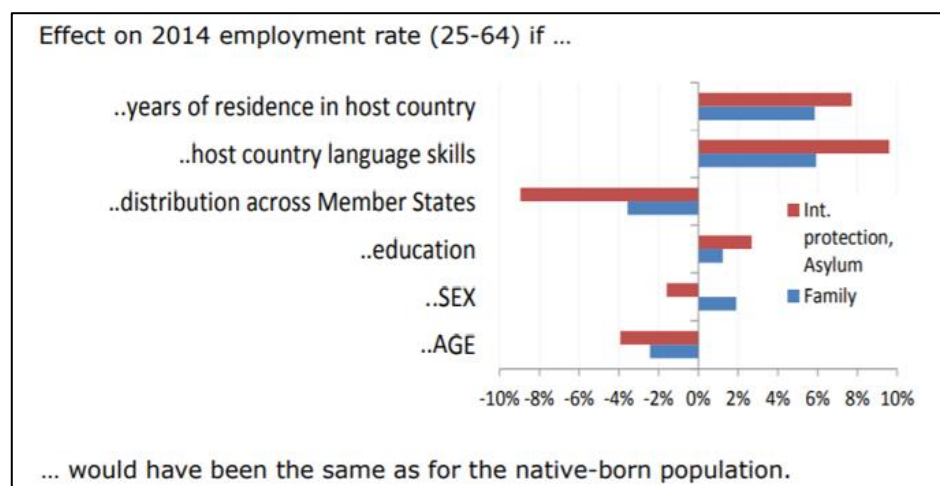
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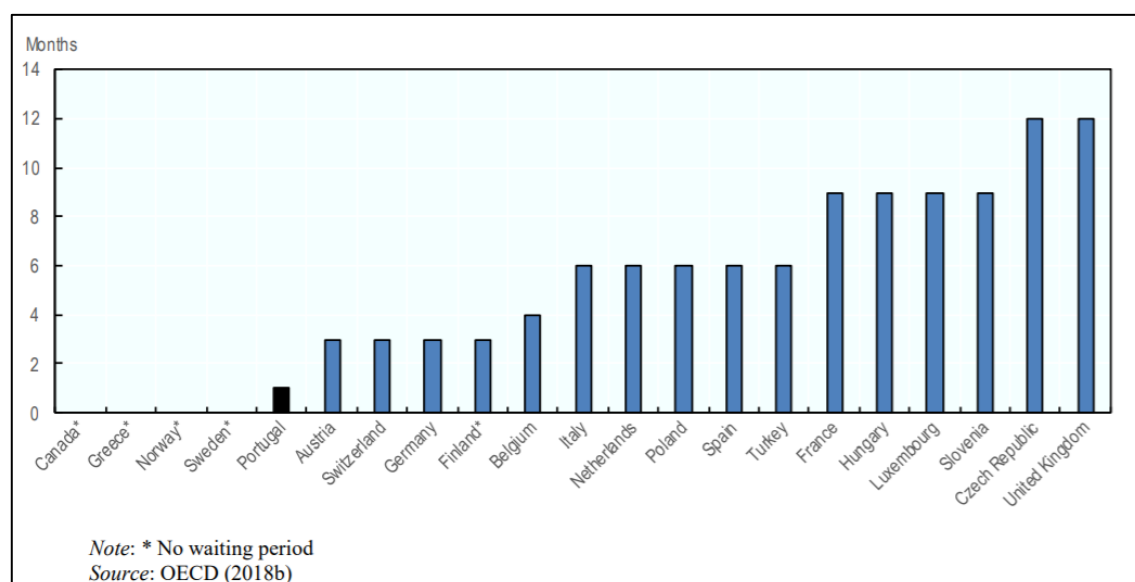
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Appendix

Appendix A: Effect of Different Socio-Demographic Variables on the Employment Rate of Refugees and Family Migrants, 2014 – Selected Variables (Peschner 2017)



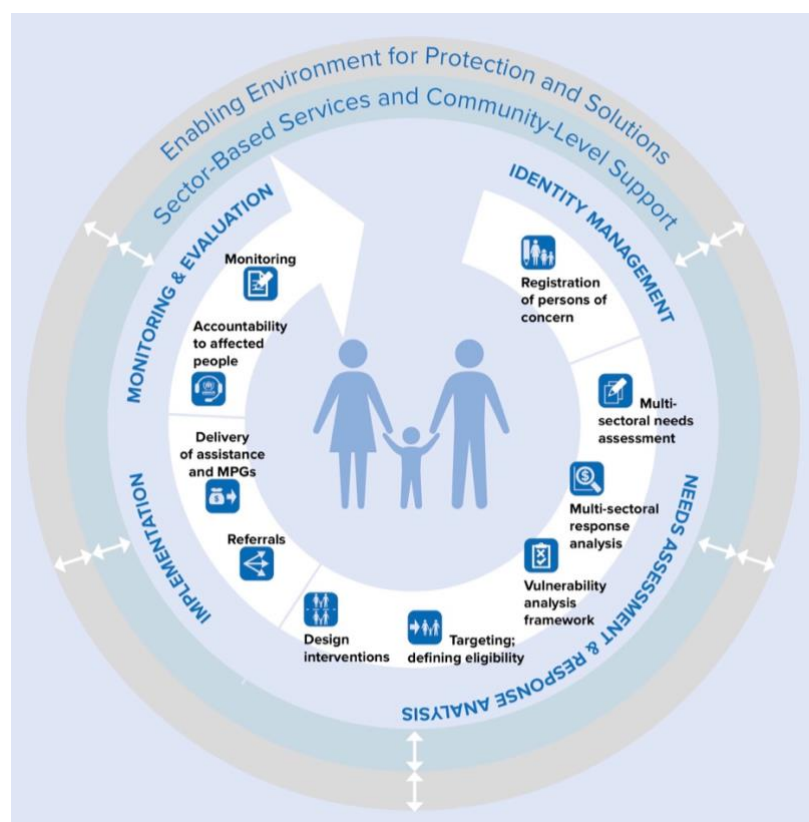
Appendix B: Most Favourable Waiting Periods for Accessing the Labour Market for Asylum Seekers in the Selected OECD Countries (OECD 2019)



Appendix C: Interview Participants

Identification	Type	Nationality	Gender	Age	Date of Interview
P1	Psychologist	Portugal	Female	N/A	November 26, 2020
P2	Psychologist	Portugal	Male	N/A	December 2, 2020
P3	Refugee	Syria	Female	N/A	November 11, 2020
P4	Refugee	Syria	Male	N/A	November 11, 2020
P5	Refugee	Syria	Male	30	December 1, 2020
P6	Refugee	Syria	Male	30	December 2, 2020
P7	Refugee	Eritrea	Male	29	December 3, 2020
P8	Refugee	Eritrea	Male	28	December 7, 2020
P9	Refugee	N/A	Male	36	December 8, 2020
P10	Refugee	Iraq	Male	31	October 8, 2020
P11	Refugee	Syria	Female	N/A	October 8, 2020
P12	Refugee	Egypt	Male	33	October 8, 2020
P13	Refugee	Syria	Female	50	October 8, 2020
P14	Refugee	Iraq	Female	31	October 8, 2020
P15	Refugee	Iraq	Male	26	December 20, 2020

Appendix D: Basic Needs Approach (UNHCR 2016)



Appendix E: Interview Transcripts

Interview with Participant 1

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler
Interviewee: Participant 1 (psychologist at CRESCER)
Date: November 26, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was conducted in English.

1. How long have you been working with refugees?

I started in May 2019 with an internship at Crescer. I visit the refugees 1-2 times a week. Crescer strives to help integrate refugees in the new country, they are living in. I do individual psychotherapy with them. If the refugees don't speak Portuguese or English, a translator is there with me.

2. What is the main difficulty you witness once a refugee arrives in Portugal?

- *There is a general knowledge gap/misconception related to trauma: When the refugees arrive, psychologists/the public are primarily concerned with the refugees' trauma/PTSD stemming from the escape journey and the war situation, refugees lived in their country of origin. However, there are other types of trauma besides the ones stemming from war. Trauma can also develop from acculturation (e.g. from not knowing anyone; from being overwhelmed by the new situation; etc.). Our role at Crescer is to minimize this acculturative stress which could otherwise lead to trauma.*
- *A big issue with mental illnesses is that if the process of acculturation is not going well and refugees start feeling left out, most of the pre-existing traumas and illnesses will reoccur because refugees are going to be in a vulnerable place and experience the issues of the past.*
- *Finally, another main difficulty is the language.*

3. What is your perception of how open refugees are to the Portuguese culture? Does it change over time?

From my professional experience, the refugees are open to understanding the Portuguese culture, but they don't know many Portuguese people. Thus, they don't know a lot about the culture and stay inside their bubble. On the contrary, the Portuguese community is also not very aware of the presence of refugees or the problems they experience.

4. In your experience, how important is it for refugees to maintain a part of their home culture (e.g.: religion, norms, values, beliefs)?

- *It depends on each individual, but most refugees still try to maintain their habits/traditions, even if they have to adapt to the place they are living. For most Muslims, it is important to maintain their religious traditions. Not having the freedom to maintain these practices makes refugees feel excluded, unsafe.*
- *In summary, some degree of home culture maintenance is very important for the mental health.*

5. Do you think Portuguese companies try to integrate refugees into the labor market? (How do employers and colleagues deal with hiring/working alongside refugees?)

Most Portuguese companies are still not very open to refugees. There are not many places where people 'respect' refugees, their culture, religious traditions (for example certain prayer times); This makes it difficult for refugees to find a job.

6. Have you dealt with any cases of mental illness or instability, as a result of a failed process of acculturation?

- *At CRESCER, we have no idea in which condition each individual's mental state was before coming to Portugal, and if certain people are more vulnerable to develop mental illnesses. It depends on each individual. But the process itself, in general, leaves people very vulnerable to suffer from these conditions if they are not already suffering from them.*
- *One example of failed acculturation/integration work with one male refugee here in Portugal. His wife and kid are still in Syria. His wife doesn't know how to read or write. So, it's hard to explain to her the whole journey, how she can come to Turkey and then to Portugal. As a result, this man now suffers from mental difficulties.*

7. How does trauma (from having to leave the home country) influence the ability of refugees to be integrated into society and the labor market?

A lot! In general, mental health problems such as PTSD, depression, etc. affect refugees' motivation, employment situation, ...

8. From a psychological perspective, do you consider that knowing the host country's language plays a big role in the mental health of a refugee? (increasing the sense of belonging and refugee's autonomy)

Yes, it does.

9. From your experience, how important it is for a refugee to have in-group support (e.g.: from the Arabic community or friends and family) to be properly integrated into the Portuguese society?

I think it is extremely important. The process is easier to go through if you have a family waiting at home experiencing the same problems or a group of friends that are there to support you and not feel alone in a different country. It makes the process easier, speeds up the integration, and reduces acculturative stress.

10. What about out-group support? (from the Portuguese side: employers, volunteers, Portuguese society, institutions, schools, ...)

Also very important.

- *For example, when there are no Portuguese courses, we find volunteers to help them. We do not only support their learning of Portuguese, but we also offer to explore the city and the culture with the volunteers, which makes them feel more welcome and actually a part of the community.*
- *The neighbors can also be a great help, as they can be a good source of help in the smallest of problems. If the refugees are lacking something at home, or want to ask where the supermarket, pharmacies, or other places are.*

Interview with Participant 2

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler
Interviewee: Participant 2 (psychologist at CPR)
Date: December 2, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was conducted in English.

1. How long have you been working with refugees?

For 1 year, since last December.

When working with refugees, there is sometimes a feeling of guilt and frustration due to the sense of not doing enough for them. Sometimes it is difficult for me to help since certain problems lie outside of my duties (for example help related to bureaucratic steps). There is a high rotation of employees in these organizations due to the difficulty to manage refugees' emotions. Several employees leave after one or two years.

2. What is the main difficulty you witness once a refugee arrives in Portugal?

The main difficulties for refugees:

- *The language barrier*
- *There is low social awareness amongst the Portuguese society due to still low number of refugees in the country and lack of direct contact with them. Portugal is not prepared to deal with refugees (for example the Social Security, the labor market). The Portuguese society still sees refugees as equal to immigrants.*
- *The lack of knowledge about 'social laws' from the refugee side. For example, in Portugal, it is normal to be at work at 9 am. Refugees from Middle Eastern countries often have a different perception of time. For them, it is acceptable to arrive later. But this can be seen as a lack of commitment by the employer.*

The main difficulties in the work with refugees:

- *The management of refugees' emotions and expectations is difficult.*
- *Not doing everything we can is one of the main difficulties.*
- *The conception of time is different between Portuguese and refugees from the Middle East. In Arabic countries, there are no worries about the future. They focus on the Now. But when the end of the program is approaching, only then, most of them realize the urgency and focus on the reality / the future (finding a house, work, etc.).*
- *Ex: Taxes are also new for most of the refugees.*

3. What is your perception of how open refugees are to the Portuguese culture? Does it change over time?

They respect the Portuguese culture but want to keep their own. Eventually, they adapt to the culture. They have very different views on certain topics. For example, the role of women. But let me give you another example: They have a very different idea of homosexuality. When I tried to explain it to one refugee once, he said: "When I touch 'my brother' in my country, I get killed."

4. In your experience, how important is it for refugees to maintain a part of their home culture (e.g.: religion, norms, values, beliefs)?

For them, it is very important. Their culture is their identity. Their identity is often not 'very built', because they were always persecuted. So, they often use religion and traditions to form their own identity.

5. Do you think Portuguese companies try to integrate refugees into the labor market?

There are several companies – the biggest ones that have social impact programs – that try to integrate refugees.

But in general, Portuguese companies don't feel the urge to help because they don't know a lot about refugees. They have this "maybe next time"-mentality and prefer to stay in their comfort zone.

6. Have you dealt with any cases of mental illness or instability, as a result of a failed process of acculturation?

Personally no, but the acculturation process can emphasize their mental instabilities. By telling refugees what they have to do, refugees are stressed.

In Portugal, there is a lot that has to be done regarding mental health. It is not even easy for the Portuguese to access mental health support and it is even harder for refugees.

Refugees always use their religion as a way to solve a situation, to manage emotions, to deal with difficulties.

7. How does trauma influence the ability of refugees to be integrated into society and the labour market?

Due to trauma, these refugees feel like they cannot trust anyone. This hinders integration in the workplace and society.

Trauma affects every relation to everyone. There is even a lack of trust in people they encounter every day – like us from CPR. Thus, it is even harder when they have to deal with people they don't know, like new colleagues, a new boss at work, etc.

8. From a psychological perspective, do you consider that knowing the host country's language plays a big role in the mental health of a refugee (increasing the sense of belonging and refugee's autonomy)?

The language is the first relation with the new country. If you don't have that, it will be much more difficult. The problem is that some simply don't want to learn Portuguese. They feel scared of losing or forgetting their own language, of losing their own identity / their first language, for example, their specific dialect of their tribe.

Language can give you a sense of connection with other people.

9. From your experience, how important it is for a refugee to have in-group support (e.g.: from the Arabic community or friends and family) to be properly integrated into the Portuguese society?

Ingroup support is very important.

Example: In February, we received a new group of refugees. At first, they didn't believe/trust in our work. It was very difficult. Then we put them in contact with other refugees and these others were passing the message, to trust in our work, to them.

10. What about out-group support? (employers, volunteers, neighbours...)

If you feel a lack of support, the trust suffers. You can only fight this perceived 'lack of support' with support. We can do a lot of activities, but if you feel like you lost the support of the people around you, the mistrust will increase significantly.

Out-group support is very important. But the society, in general, is not very aware of the refugee topic.

11. Do you think refugees are underestimated by employers / the society?

- It is not really a matter of underestimation but rather a lack of knowledge in general. For example, employers often don't know how to deal with refugees, and what are the procedures when employing refugees: How to validate their skills? Do they have a social security number? Etc.*
- There are cases where people consider refugees as less prepared than other workers available that did not suffer from the same situations. However, the major barrier is still the lack of awareness about the general situation.*
- Regarding skill verification, in an ideal situation, companies should find a way to certify/validate refugee's skills.*

Interview with Participants 3 and 4

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler with the help Portuguese-English interpreters (project group)
Interviewees: Participant 3 and Participant 4 (Syrian refugee couple from Amal Soap)
Date: November 11, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was originally conducted in Portuguese and translated to English.

1. When did you arrive in Portugal? Why Portugal?

Almost 4 years ago.

2. Did you arrive alone or with your family?

We came with three kids from Syria to Portugal.

3. When did you find out about Amal?

Participant 3: In 2017, when I was pregnant, I met a friend of the person responsible for our family, who started visiting me and asked if I wanted to work on the project.

4. Do you have kids? How are they integrating at school, in society, etc.?

We have 5 kids, 3 are Syrian and 2 are Portuguese. They are all at school at the moment. They are in fact too well integrated within the society. Since the kids came here at a young age, they want to be Portuguese and adapt to the Portuguese community, while we still have strong ties to our Syrian heritage, which creates generational shocks and makes it sometimes difficult for us and the children.

5. Did you work before coming to Portugal?

Participant 3: Yes, I watched and helped my aunt crafting the soap, and also worked as a hairdresser. Participant 4 did construction work before coming to Portugal but a back issue forced him to find a different job in Portugal.

6. What was the biggest difficulty/challenge upon arriving?

Participant 4: I haven't seen my family for almost 6 years. My brothers and sisters are also now at the Turkish border, it is very serious in Syria now. They also would like to come to Portugal, but it is very complicated. In Turkey, they have programs to come to Portugal but they need to wait a long time. In Syria, they don't have such programs. When we left Syria for Turkey, we walked 8 hours on the mountain in very cold weather, we were 11 people - me, my family, my sister with 4 children and another friend. We stayed in Turkey for 45 days and then we went by balloon to Greece, very serious too. When I realized how dangerous it was to go all the way, I told my family to stay in Syria. When we arrived in Greece, I wanted to go to Germany, where the construction company, for which I worked in Lebanon, is located, but they closed the border with Greece and Macedonia. We stayed in Greece for 9 months and then I came with this program to Portugal. I didn't know Portugal, only Cristiano Ronaldo, but now I like it. Portugal is better, there is peace, good people who help a lot and for the children to learn, with school, it is good. But we miss Damascus. However, there is no electricity, gas, gasoline, very cold and very expensive - it is not possible to live in Syria now. (A part of Ali's family is still in Syria.)

7. Do you speak Portuguese? How did you learn?

We are learning at the IEPF (Portuguese institute of labour and professional formation), near Oeiras Parque. The courses are free of pay and the institute covers the travelling costs.

8. Do you feel part of the community in Portugal and Lisbon?

Even though Portuguese people are actually open to the Syrian country, Portugal is missing a Syrian community, because refugees are integrated wherever it is possible. It is very important that not only you get

along with locals that respect you, but it is also essential to share your day-to-day with people in the same situation you are in.

9. Do you usually interact with Portuguese people or do you prefer to socialize within your ethnic community?

Yes, we interact with many Portuguese friends. But we miss talking with other Syrian people.

10. What is the thing you miss the most from your home country?

Everything, our family, our house, our neighbours and friends, our old jobs...

11. Do you plan to go back to your country or move to another one in the nearest future (next 5 years)?

For now, we plan to stay in Portugal, but we do miss Syria and plan to return once the situation becomes more stable. We haven't seen our family in 6 years, and we want to be reunited.

12. Do you feel that you have to change/leave (parts of) your culture behind in order to fit into the Portuguese society?

Portugal is very open to Arabic culture, words are similar and people in Portugal respect our country, unlike some countries in Europe (in France for example, women cannot wear a hijab by law and here we can). However, you always leave behind some small parts of the Syrian culture when you deal with a new culture, but never the most engrained parts (the traditions, the religion), which sometimes leads to cultural shocks with the children that are born in Portugal and don't want to abide by the Arabic traditions and rules. We respect the Portuguese culture, so we expect in return that Portuguese people respect our cultural traditions as well.

13. Are you curious to learn more about the Portuguese culture? / Do you want to be part of the Portuguese society?

Yes, for example, we visited Vila Nova de Gaia recently!

Interview with Participant 5

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler
Interviewee: Participant 5 (Refugee; Contact established through CRESCER)
Date: December 1, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was originally conducted in English.

General information on Participant 5:

Age: 30
Gender: male
Nationality: Syrian

1. When did you arrive in Portugal?

I arrived 1 year ago.

2. Did you choose to go to Portugal?

I didn't choose to go to Portugal, I was assigned this place by the United Nations when I applied for refugee status.

3. Did you arrive alone or with your family?

I arrived alone. My brother lives in Germany. My family is in Turkey. Before I came to Portugal, I was 10 years in Egypt. There I applied at the UN to get resettled and was sent to Portugal.

4. Do you live alone or with someone else?

No, but I live with a friend, in Moscavide, near the airport.

5. What are your professional background and former career? Last job before coming to Portugal? And have you already got a job here? If yes, which one?

I am constantly searching for a job. I even applied in a call centre but I am still waiting for the confirmation, still no interviews in my field. In Egypt, I worked as a make-up artist.

6. What was the biggest difficulty/challenge upon arriving?

The Arabic community is very small here, so I had many difficulties finding friends and contacts when I came here. The minimum wage is very small and the rents are very expensive in Lisbon, so we can't really live in the city. Work opportunities are also very scarce.

7. How are you learning or how have you learned the local language?

I don't speak Portuguese, but I am learning it in a course. It's free, but it stopped in March when Covid-19 started. I am also practicing Portuguese with a Brazilian friend.

8. Do you feel like a part of the community in Portugal and Lisbon?

I am not a lot with Portuguese people, mostly with Brazilians.

9. Do you feel welcome in Portugal?

I feel welcome, yes. Here is no racism.

10. Do you usually interact with Portuguese people or do you prefer to socialize within your ethnic community?

Not a lot, I have more Brazilian friends. I didn't really get to know any Portuguese people. And the problem with the Syrian community being so small makes it harder to find other refugees.

11. What is the thing you miss the most from your home country?

I haven't been there, in Syria, for over 10 years. But from Egypt, I really miss my friends and my work.

12. Do you plan to go back to your country or move to another one in the nearest future (next 5 years)

To be honest, I still don't know, I am still searching for opportunities to stay here in Portugal.

If I don't find work, I see myself leaving Portugal.

13. Do you feel that you have to change/leave (parts of) your culture behind in order to fit into the Portuguese society?

No, I can do anything here. So, I don't feel like I am forced to change parts of myself to live here.

14. Are you curious to learn more about the Portuguese culture? / Do you want to be part of the Portuguese society?

It is a nice culture. I like their traditions and how free I feel here. I haven't experienced any racist situations.

The problems are mainly work-related.

15. What do you value the most about Portugal?

The weather

Interview with Participant 6

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler
Interviewee: Participant 6 (Refugee; Contact established through CRESCER)
Date: December 2, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was originally conducted in English.

General information on Participant 6:

Age: 30
Gender: male
Nationality: Syria (from Damascus)

1. When did you arrive in Portugal?

In 2016

2. Did you arrive alone or with your family?

In the beginning, I came alone, but then my wife joined me later.

3. What are your professional background and former career? Last job before coming to Portugal? And have you already got a job here? If yes, which one?

I was studying law in Syria, but I didn't finish the program due to the war. I already got a job here, I'm currently working at Teleperformance.

4. What was the biggest difficulty/challenge upon arriving?

- *There are many challenges, but when I arrived here, the financial support was not enough. Only 1,5 years of financial support from the government (150 Euros/month).*

Also, if you have a work contract, you cannot apply for a scholarship.

- *When I travelled from Greece, I didn't choose Portugal, I preferred Belgium, Germany, etc., but I was assigned here.*
- *The very stony and slow process at SEF. It took three years until my wife could travel to Portugal. There is no Portuguese embassy in Syria, which made the process even more difficult.*
- *Finding an apartment: The requirement to have a "fiador", for someone who arrives alone and doesn't know anyone, is difficult. Or you have a 3 months waiting period or need to pay a lot of money at once. When the contract with CRESCER finishes, the police is obliging me to leave. CRESCER knows about this issue but does not have any solution for it.*

5. How are you learning or how have you learned the local language?

Not much, I am studying Portuguese but it is very hard to study due to the difficulty of the language. However, most of the people where I live speak English, which helps to understand everyone.

6. Do you feel like a part of the community in Portugal and Lisbon?

70%, I still don't have the nationality here and I still don't know the local language.

7. Do you feel welcome in Portugal?

Yes, the people are very friendly and there is good communication with the population. They are welcoming to the fact that I am a refugee and I don't suffer prejudice.

- 8. Do you usually interact with Portuguese people or do you prefer to socialize within your ethnic community?**

I have many Portuguese friends.

- 9. What is the thing you miss the most from your home country?**

Just my family (my parents and my brother). I feel like I have nothing there because I lost everything due to the war.

- 10. Do you plan to go back to your country or move to another one in the nearest future (next 5 years)?**

Right now, I have everything here, so I want to continue living here.

- 11. Do you feel that you have to change/leave (parts of) your culture behind in order to fit into the Portuguese society?**

No, I didn't feel like I have to change my habits to live in Portugal. Sometimes I feel some people here in Portugal are very similar to Syrian people.

- 12. Are you curious to learn more about the Portuguese culture? / Do you want to be part of the Portuguese society?**

(not directly asked)

- 13. What do you value the most about Portugal?**

The weather, it reminds me of my home country. Lisbon at night is amazing as well.

Interview with Participant 7

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler with the help Portuguese-English interpreters (project group)
Interviewee: Participant 7 (Refugee; Contact established through CRESCER)
Date: December 3, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was originally conducted in Portuguese and translated to English.

General information on Participant 7:

Age: 29
Gender: Male
Nationality: Eritrea

1. When did you arrive in Portugal?

February 2016

2. Why did you decide to leave your country? Why Portugal?

Portugal was the country available to leave the refugee camp.

3. Did you arrive alone or with your family?

Alone

4. What are your professional background and former career? Last job before coming to Portugal? And have you already got a job here? If yes, which one?

I used to be a Barber. When I got to Portugal, I started working at a fish warehouse, and now I am working at a DVD company.

5. What was the biggest difficulty/challenge upon arriving?

The language. I learned it during my work. I had no time to have classes.

6. Do you feel part of the community in Portugal and Lisbon?

(not directly answered)

7. Do you feel welcomed in Portugal?

Yes, I like it here, I liked the culture and accepted coming to Portugal.

8. Do you usually interact with Portuguese people or do you prefer to socialize within your ethnic community?

In Lisbon there is no community from Eritrea, so I get along with Portuguese people from work. From time to time I hang out also after work with friends, at birthday parties, and other events.

9. What is the thing you miss the most from your home country?

My family mostly, they stayed there.

10. Do you plan to go back to your country or move to another one in the nearest future (next 5 years)?

I don't know how it will go in the future, but now I see myself living in Portugal. My life is good right now and life is too difficult in Eritrea.

11. Do you feel that you have to change/leave (parts of) your culture behind in order to fit into the Portuguese society?

No, I don't think so, I accepted the Portuguese culture because I am living here with more Portuguese people and they have accepted me as well.

12. Are you curious to learn more about the Portuguese culture? / Do you want to be part of the Portuguese society?

Yes, I like Portugal, never visited outside Lisbon, but I really like the city. But I would like to visit Madeira Island.

13. What do you value the most about Portugal?

The safety that I feel. Back in my country, it is also safe, but I feel more free here. I can choose what I want to do here. Back in my country, I would be forced to work for the government.

Interview with Participant 8

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler with the help Portuguese-English interpreters (project group)
Interviewee: Participant 8 (Refugee; Contact established through CRESCER)
Date: December 7, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was originally conducted in Portuguese and translated into English.

General information on Participant 8:

Age: 28
Gender: Male
Nationality: Eritrea

1. When did you arrive in Portugal?

29/02/2016 – 4 years ago

2. Why did you leave your country? Why Portugal?

Due to the war, I was forced into the military, from 18 years, and we have to be there for our entire life. So I left the country because I didn't want to spend my whole life in the army. I wanted to travel to different places to discover the world and chase better opportunities.

I left Eritrea for Sudan, took a boat across the red sea. We spent 3 days at sea. Then, I left for Libya, but I spent days in the Sahara Desert. I had to pay 1600 dollars to enter Libya. However, in Libya, nobody cared about my situation. The friends I travelled with and I were ignored and during our Sahara Desert travel. Some of them died and there was no help during the whole trip given to us. After Libya, we went on a boat to cross the Mediterranean and arrived in Lampedusa. But the boat was too small, 30-40 people from Eritrea, plus more people from other countries, and we have been saved by a bigger boat from the European Union, that brought us to Lampedusa. From there, we have been brought to Sicily, where we had an interview. After the interview, I have been allocated to Portugal. I knew that Italy wasn't good for refugees, not much help, etc. I had my brother in Germany and I asked him about Portugal, but he didn't know a lot, just that it was kind of a poor country, not many opportunities.

I did not choose Portugal, I was assigned to me by the European Union, I didn't know anything about Portugal. However, JRS set up a meeting with the 'Presidente da Câmara'.

The monthly allowance of 150 euros is not enough.

After having crossed Spain and France, I lived for 2 weeks in Germany with his brother and didn't like it. It felt like they were racists. Since I didn't like it, I went to a friend in Finland, but I didn't have my documents, because the Portuguese had all my documents. They stopped me and I had to stay in prison for 4 months. I tried to contact Italy, but there were difficulties. But then they managed to contact the refugee camp there and so Portugal too, and I could go back to Portugal.

When a refugee comes to Portugal, we must make an 18-months contract (CRESCER). I couldn't even speak Portuguese, I did not understand how Portugal works and they made us sign a contract where at the end I am thrown out of the house I am in. How do they expect us to understand right away what to do and then expect us to find a house after that period?

The Portuguese government, the municipality, and also CRESCER, they do not understand what we need. They give us money for food, etc. – 150€ - that is not enough. I don't want money, I didn't come here for money, I'm here for better opportunities, I want to study, to learn how things work, so I can do a good job and take my road. I wanted to learn Portuguese as soon as possible, but they told me I had to wait – wait for what? And then they gave a language course of 150 hours, that is not enough to really learn it! They don't give us information about how things work here, about housing, etc.

3. Did you arrive alone or with your family?

I came alone to Portugal. I travelled with my father until Libya. My wife, pregnant, joined me in September 2019. Now I have a baby who was born in Portugal already.

4. What are your professional background and former career? Last job before coming to Portugal? And have you already got a job here? If yes, which one

Back in Eritrea, I was a carpenter. My first job was fruit picking here in Portugal. Currently, I am working in a warehouse in Prior Velho. I work at night, from 9 pm to 5 am.

5. What was the biggest difficulty/challenge upon arriving?

- *Getting a house contract after the 18-month program was over. I found a house for 400€/month but without anything inside and being given only 150€/month. They were also asking for a fiador.*
- *Being treated like I am an immigrant and not a refugee.*
- *I didn't bring any documents so cannot prove my educational background.*
- *I had to ask for food at ReFood because 150€ per month is not enough to buy food.*
- *I lacked help in different areas (day to day issues, legal, financial, etc.).*

6. How are you learning or how have you learned the local language?

I learned a bit of Portuguese while working in some temporary jobs in the beginning. I had to wait for plenty of months, but now I am taking a 150-hour online Portuguese course.

7. Do you feel like a part of the community in Portugal and Lisbon?

Yes, my son is Portuguese, I have plenty of friends that support me.

8. Do you feel welcome in Portugal?

In Portugal, people have a lot of respect for everyone generally, many expressions like "por favor" or "com licença" and this is really great to see.

9. Do you usually interact with Portuguese people or do you prefer to socialize within your ethnic community?

I have lots of Portuguese friends. I really like Portuguese people, they are not racist. I asked a Portuguese friend for 1700 euros to help getting my wife to Portugal and he gave it immediately. It feels like you can trust people from this country.

10. What is the thing you miss the most from your home country?

The whole country, the structure and culture here in Portugal are very different (e.g. Seeing women or under-aged people smoking is really strange. I am not used to it).

11. Do you plan to go back to your country or move to another one in the nearest future (next 5 years)?

No, I have no plans on going back to Eritrea. I left the country behind without wanting to ever come back. However, sometimes I still miss my country because I lived there most of my life. But I feel Portuguese at this point, I like the people here, I want to spend my life here.

12. Do you feel that you have to change/leave (parts of) your culture behind in order to fit into the Portuguese society?

Yes, I did feel that. When I came to Portugal, I felt like people looked at me as a person that was not up to something good. People would not trust me and lend money to me because they assumed that I was not going to use it to solve the issues I had with housing.

So, I had to leave my costumes behind and try as hard as I could to learn the language quickly, so I could better communicate with people and explain my situation to them.

13. Are you curious to learn more about the Portuguese culture? / Do you want to be part of the Portuguese society?

I have been visiting a bit of Portugal when searching for work, I have been to Algarve, and so far, I loved it. The places I discovered are very beautiful.

During quarantine, I worked in delivering from Corte Ingles, so I knew more places outside Lisbon.

14. What do you value the most about Portugal?

The respect that people have for each other. I really appreciate that people are kind to each other, and I feel like we have that in Portugal. I also felt that people are not racist here. Racism is something that I cannot stand because those people don't understand what we refugees go through to get here.

15. Are you planning on raising your baby in some Portuguese culture (learning the language, Portuguese habits, etc.)?

I will teach my kid the basis of respect and family. I don't like the lack of respect between son and father. I don't understand divorced couples and couples who live together and have kids without getting married. Most important for a refugee is not to find a job right away, but to study first. Education is the most determinant factor.

Interview with Participant 9

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler
Interviewee: Participant 9
Date: December 8, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was originally conducted in English and had a duration of 2 hours. Initially refraining from showing his face, after talking for 1 hour, Participant 8 activated his video camera.

General information on Participant 9:

Age: 36
Gender: Male
Nationality: N/A

He is writing a book – an autobiography (see comment on the book at the end of the interview). He was also a professional swimmer once, swimming in rivers for 8 hours. Now, in Portugal, his hobby is fishing, and he is really passionate about it because he loves being still and watching the water. He said: “*Fishing teaches you how to be patient.*”

1. When did you arrive in Portugal?

I arrived in Portugal some years ago from Greece. (4-5 years ago)

From where? Your original nationality or do you prefer not to say it?

Yeah. (prefers not to say it)

2. Did you choose to come to Portugal?

I didn't choose. It's not an option for any refugee. There are lots of people, it was their option, but not for refugees. Because refugees came through a program, called relocation program, from the United Nations (UNHCR). Mostly the people who came from Italy, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon – most of them came by a relocation program. Not all, but most.

3. Did you arrive alone or with your family?

I wasn't alone. I came with a brother. To be honest, I didn't know Portuguese people, I've met some Portuguese in Athens, and they were waiting at the airport. Then I met with them like 2 times again and that's it.

But that's not so difficult, because each place you go, you will meet people. There are lots of people to meet, to talk. Everywhere you can have friends. So, this is not the problem for me. Now, I have friends in Portugal – Portuguese, Italian, lots of nationalities. Fortunately, the good people are much more than the bad people. That gives huge hope. (pause) To be honest, not in my case, because I already lost my hope. I don't see any hope. I don't believe in hope anymore after what happened, after what I've seen in my life so far, but I seriously wish for others to be really happy.

4. What are your professional background and former career? Last job before coming to Portugal? And have you already got a job here? If yes, which one?

I'm not working at Mezze, but I have 3 certificates in cooking. I was a professional chef back in my country. I'm employed right now. I am working for a company. I would never work for a restaurant. It would be impossible for me. I have changed a couple of companies in Portugal. So, it's different between the companies and also different from the companies to restaurants and this stuff.

Since I came here, I'm working differently than my profession. In my profession, I couldn't have a good offer. So, I just decided to not do it. I will maybe do it one day for myself. I would like to do my own business, but now it's a bit difficult. I'm waiting also for my documents, just tell me that I am allowed to live, not to die.

5. What was the biggest difficulty/challenge upon arriving?

Let me tell you something: Refugees have travelled to Europe especially in 2015/2016. They travelled in a very bad situation. So, many of them got health troubles. And the health system in Portugal is really bad. And also their excuses - each time you ask for something, for a doctor or a specialized doctor, immediately they will tell you: "Sorry, we are poor. We cannot help you." This is the excuse always. "We are poor". Sorry, if you are poor - I said that many times – if you are poor, why are you forcing people to come to your country? Why don't you leave people to live in peace? People are suffering in your country! (imitating Portuguese authorities) "Yes, but we are treating you as a Portuguese person." Sorry, who told you, that I want to be treated as a Portuguese person. I'm a refugee, so please treat me as a refugee. I came to Portugal with empty pockets. Portuguese people have money, work, everything. They can look after themselves, but I cannot, I just came. And I need something urgent. (imitating Portuguese authorities again) "Sorry, we will not help. We cannot help you. We are poor."

And when you arrived, have you been in one of these programs?

Yes. For example, I had a physical issue and I was asking them almost every single day: "I need a specialist, I need a specialist!" and always the answer was "Sorry, we cannot help you. Go look after yourself!". And for sure sometimes some racist words. Some really bad words either from the associations, the organizations - the public ones or the public service – the immigration service. No one is willing to listen to you. Refugees are not being heard. They don't allow you to speak.

So, you felt left alone by them?

Not only me! I can bring you tons of refugees who will say the same – exactly the same as I'm saying now. I have met lots of refugees. Only the ones, who got the benefits somehow, will say different things. I know people who got paid to talk differently on TV, on media, on the news, anywhere. I know the persons and I know how much they got and from where. Just to show the media that 'we are great and we are really thankful and grateful; They gave us everything. They gave us all the support we need. They are helping us, they are teaching us. They are, they are, they are' ... (pause) ... just for some euros. You have people with you that will tell you what to say. That's happening, it's still happening. Just to be present in the EU, doesn't mean that you are doing everything great. If you all claim that you have rights. I've been told: "You have no right to claim your rights." But I was stupid and I insisted. Then I got lots of troubles. And now I'm without papers because of that, just because I was asking: "Please, give me my rights as Geneva does.". They just told me, "You will not get your papers.", without mentioning anything. But I still have my case at court, and I have my lawyer, and things gone, and I hope that something will appear.

6. Do you feel to be part of the community in Portugal and Lisbon?

Answered in question 7 and 8

7. Do you feel welcomed in Portugal?

Look, it's different. When you talk about the Portuguese community – they are including everyone. And that's going to make a huge difference. Because people are completely different than the decision-makers – people call them here SEF. So, here are two different things: Portuguese people are really nice people, friendly people, they are really doing their best to be happy, to make others happy. The country itself is a nice country, nice weather. They have lots of places to go and to visit. They have some historical places. So, in general, everything is nice – the country and the people. But the immigration service office, they are doing their best just to send people out of the country. They have some radical people, they have people working there and in very important positions who hate others. And hate like seriously hate (strong emphasis) the refugees and immigrants. I know some of them personally. I'm not talking through someone. I know them, I have met with them, I had situations with them, I still have situations with them there. But again, if you are asking about the other people – the other people are really nice. They are really friendly, so nice people.

8. Do you usually interact with Portuguese people or do you prefer to socialize within your ethnic community?

I'm seeing everyone. I have friends from many cultures, from many different countries, ethnicities, lots of people. For example, from Portugal, European citizens, Arabic people, Turkish, Jewish, Russian, whatever.

And do you also speak Portuguese?

Unfortunately, not yet, because I didn't have the chance to study. And by the way, I'm not the only one. At least 80% of the refugees in Portugal, who have already been living in Portugal, and who already even speak Portuguese, they don't speak Portuguese very well. For me, yes, I can. I do communicate outside if I need something if I need to go somewhere, to ask for a direction, in a restaurant – you know, the basic needs. But even the refugees who have been in Portugal for about 3-4 years, they are still unable to speak fluently. Not even fluently, but in a good way. Because none of the refugees got any chance to study.

Why do think is that? What should be improved?

The same courses, but taking it seriously. For example, when I went to the school, the teacher told me: "I know that all of you came just for the certification to apply for citizenship. So, that's why I'm not going to care that much about teaching you because anyways, I will give you the certification and everyone will get it.". She was honest and it was weird for me. How come she is being honest like that? Because she shouldn't be. It's not even good for her, or at least for her CV. So, that's what is happening. And also when they teach you, for example, they only teach you A1 and A2, which is nothing. You won't be able to learn A1, because you need to continue to be able to communicate with people. Now after that, if you want, go find a school for yourself and pay. And no one cares, even if you have money or not, it's just your responsibility. Go to pay yourself. Especially, it's different if you are in the countryside or if you are in the city centre or if you are living in a place close to the centre.

I think if you only speak fluently Portuguese, you won't get a good job. If you want to get a good job, you need to speak English, not Portuguese. Because, if you do speak Portuguese you won't be finding any job. You will be working in a restaurant or construction, etc. These are the jobs you find if you are speaking only Portuguese. So, you need to learn or you need to speak English to find a good job. A good job in Portugal doesn't mean that you have a great job. The salaries will stay the same, you will get 700-800 Euros per month net. And life is really difficult not only for refugees, I'm talking in general. Life is really difficult for everyone who lives in Portugal. I feel really bad for them. It's an expensive country and the salaries are really low.

9. What is the thing you miss the most from your home country?

Can we pass, please? (starts crying)

(continues, even though the question was skipped) I miss my wife and my daughter. I miss my girlfriend. This is what I miss from my home country. You don't know what it means when you miss something and you know that you will never see it again.

10. Do you plan to go back to your country or move to another one in the nearest future (next 5 years)?

Look, I don't like to talk about the future, because no one knows what's going to happen tomorrow. Especially me, because I seriously don't know. Because I'm waiting for a decision from the court if they will allow me to live or to die. And it's like this, exactly like this – either I will live or die. So, I'm just waiting for a decision from the court. So, the court, the judge will decide, this person – he will live, or he will die. And it's by word like this. Because of my case in the court, even the judge himself, they say: "He should be deported to his country, but if he is deported, his life is at risk, in danger." So, they know that already, so it's completely, like 100%, it's going to be the judge's decision – either this person will live or die. So, now I'm focusing on how to live, not to die. I'm not thinking about the future if I will leave or not (laughing nervously) because that's not even in my thoughts. I don't even think about that. All I care about is am I going to live or not.

11. Do you feel that you have to change/leave (parts of) your culture behind in order to fit into the Portuguese society?

Look, I feel that my culture and the Portuguese culture are very similar. So, it was easy for me to integrate into Portuguese society and community. As I told you, Portuguese people are really nice, so I didn't have any

difficulty to communicate with Portuguese people to be integrated into the society. So my culture and the Portuguese culture it's not the same for sure – absolutely – it's completely different, but it's very similar. Maybe if I would change something, I would love to change the public services. Because the bureaucracy is eating us all, and this is really not nice for the country's future. Processes are really, really slow. Working like turtles. So if you need something like for example, I'm just trying to get an appointment at the social security. I'm just trying to get the appointment, just to have the appointment for a couple of months. To get an appointment with a specialized doctor in a hospital, you need to wait at least one year.

Refugees who came through a relocation program, they came with cases. They didn't just come like 'Hello, I just came, I just arrived'. No, they were being registered by United Nation. So, all their files, their cases have been checked by Interpol, by the United Nations, by SIS, by everyone. So, they don't have to wait 1 or 2 years just to get a silly decision from the decision-makers to be accepted. They are people who need to live, who need to feel free. And this is one of my main stupid points I was asking always (referring to why he has a case at court now). There are refugees waiting for 2 years, sometimes more than 2 years, to get a decision. That's really bad, that's even torture for refugees. Because of that now, many percent of the refugees need a psychologist, no - a psychiatrist. You have no idea what does it mean to be waiting for something and you don't know what is it or what's it going to be. They are just waiting for nothing. And also, when you see everyone is free and happy, going around, travelling, doing vacations, doing everything, and you are just sitting here and you are not doing anything. Imagine also, plus we don't speak the language, we have no support to speak the language, and you cannot do anything, you have no job, you have no money – that makes it even worse. So I hope in the next 100 years these things will be different because from now to the next 100 years I don't believe that will be different or anything will be changed.

Let me tell you something, why refugees are really afraid to talk. SEF has no problem killing people because they already did. And the murderers, they are happy with their families at home and they are sitting at their beds, enjoying their time with their families. So, we came from countries and we are the ones who know best what it means to be threatened, what it means to be treated in that way. So, we don't want to go back to that point.

Like for example, I'm sure that you have heard about that Ukrainian guy who had been killed - I don't say killed, I would say even executed - in the airport. They were beating him until he died. And the officers were from SEF, three officers from the immigration service. And even in a 'funny' way one of them was saying: 'Good, today I don't have to go to the gym, because I already did.' So, the refugees, we are seriously afraid. We left our countries because of that, but unfortunately, we came to a country - I know the country here, the law is much stronger than in our countries because, in most of our countries, there is not even a law, but we are just surprised that: Oh my god, the same situation is happening here? We came to change our life, we didn't come to not change the room. We crossed seas, we passed mountains, we passed all the danger. For example, I've passed death. I've seen death, I was too close to the death more than 10 times in my trip. I've left my country inside a casket. I hid inside the casket for 18,5 hours just to pass a little part. People were shooting me. Lots of people have been killed in front of me by different groups. I crossed the sea, people died with me in my boat. I was in hell in some parts. So, I didn't pass all that way to come to the same situation. (speaking agitatedly) I've passed all of that to have a different life, not to be afraid – every time I think 'Oh my god, what will happen if I say No? What will happen if I will talk? What will happen if they just decide to send me away? What will happen if I will not be accepted to go back to the plane? What will happen...' - lots of questions. And to all these questions in my mind, I get always one answer: They gonna kill me!

I've seen people who have been sent back to their countries in a very bad way. I will not say the ways because that needs proof. And I don't have the proof, I just saw the situation. And it was an illegal situation, illegal ways. So, that's why I don't want to mention that, because I don't have proof and I don't want to make any more trouble – I already have enough.

12. Are you curious to learn more about the Portuguese culture? / Do you want to be part of the Portuguese society?

(not asked specifically)

13. What do you value the most about Portugal?

Portugal is a really nice country and I like the people very much in Portugal. They are really nice people, they are open, they are so helpful. Imagine, I went to other countries in my life. I've travelled to a lot of other countries. If you get lost in Portugal and you are asking for a direction. You just stop anyone in the street, immediately they will tell you, sometimes they will go with you. That's really great. I couldn't find this in other countries like Greece, Turkey, Germany, France.

I haven't been to Italy yet, but I would love to go to Italy. Believe me, as much as you speak about Italy, it will not be the same as my father told me about it. He was crazy about Italy. He was talking always, all his life about it. Italy, Italy, Italy, Venice! It was like his dream. He went several times to Italy.

In general:

Unfortunately, people like you always share only good stuff to show that everything is great and everything is cool, that they are happy, that they are feeling amazing. Just to let you know, there are refugees who got paid to talk ... just to say some great stuff. And there are others who are afraid to speak like for example I know a guy, just because he refused to give the fingerprints for the asylum ... the process, let me explain to you how it is – the process. When you arrive as a refugee at the airport, there are some specialized people. They are from the asylum service or immigration service. They will take your fingerprints to register you as a refugee. So he just said: "No, I don't want to do that." And they started beating him like an animal. Forced him to ... until at the end, he said: "Wait, wait, just stop beating me. I will do whatever you want."

I know another one. They were asking him about his identity – from where he came. And he was telling them something and then he was, sorry for the word, but he was peeing blood for 10 days. (long pause) Just for you, I'm telling you this, just for you to know that lots of refugees won't accept to say anything. They will only talk: "We are good, we are happy, we are great." because refugees are really afraid.

Additional statements during an informal conversation:

When I was in your age, I was much better than now. 10 years ago, I was really better than now.

*Before we go, just let me tell you one more thing: As a refugee, what I do care about are the services. I need them to treat me well. I don't care about the people, because you have good and bad people everywhere. I'm an adult enough to know who is good and who is bad, to choose only the good people to be on my side. I can decide, I can choose, which one should be my friend and which one shouldn't. Maybe I won't understand some people in the beginning, but after some time I will. But as a refugee what I do care about (strong emphasis) mostly is how the authorities are treating me, not just telling me (imitating): "You are just a f***ing refugee." I've been told that. Yes, you don't have to tell me that. So, what all of us care about is: Please just respect us! We are human beings just like you! Just treat me good, even if the process takes long. Be professional! (appealing to authorities) You are in an important position because you are the view of the country! You will make these people love your country or not. But the people in Portugal, they gave us another idea. The public services are really bad, but we are really lucky because the people are completely the opposite. So, it's kind of a compensation. If you will keep talking to the refugees, believe me, most of them will be afraid to talk. I'm not afraid – yes for sure I still hide lots of things – but the things I've already said, 95% of them will not say them. For me, I said it because I have nothing to lose because anyway I'm going to die. I'm sorry, I know it's a heavy word to say but this is the reality. Because after all I'm seriously tired... (long pause) I'm fighting with the court since 2 years. (exhales deeply) Nothing appeared, they are just refusing, refusing, refusing. Silly, ridiculous answers from the court, nothing makes sense. "His life will be in danger in his country, but he will be deported to his country." So remember how ridiculous this decision is. "We will send you to be killed but first we will torture you." So this is. I have nothing to lose.*

I know I said some really hard things today. I apologize for that. You are still too young to hear these words. I'm really sorry about that.

Comment on autobiography (unpublished):

I'm writing a book now. In English, I've finished the book in Arabic, so now I'm just translating it to English. I just finished it last month and I started when I came here – almost some years. It will be my story, my experience – since I was born. To be honest, it won't be me who is going to release it. It will be in my testament that my brother should release the book because my book can be called 'Once upon a man'. The name is really long, that's

why I made it shorter. 'Once upon a time there was a man'. Maybe you will read it once and you will know it happened. I hope that it will be released, that many people will read it. Actually, I was thinking to make a film, but I didn't get the opportunity. I talked with many directors, but none of them accepted even to listen to me. I think it could really make something for them because it has everything. It's a mix between action, drama – for sure it's gonna be dramatic, romance. I've met with some Portuguese directors and they didn't listen to me. I tried to reach some directors from Hollywood and also didn't give me any answer. I reached someone from Hollywood, he's really important. I had an appointment to meet with him, but then he just didn't answer my calls anymore for some reason, I don't know why. Another videographer, I've talked to, also just disappeared. So, maybe one day someone will try to after reading the book. I will see the film in the other life. I will not see it, but at least people can see it, and maybe some of them will understand, and they will know.

Interview with Participant 10 (Mezze employee)

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler
Interviewee: Participant 10
Date: October 8, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was originally conducted in English.

General information on Participant 10:

Age: 31
Gender: Male
Nationality: Iraq

1. When did you arrive in Portugal?

3 years ago

2. Why did you decide to leave your country?

war

Why Portugal?

"I have been reallocated."

It was not your choice?

"Yes, it was not."

3. Did you arrive alone or with your family?

"I came with my brother."

4. What are your professional background and former career? Last job before coming to Portugal?

"I used to study ... work and study ... work in summer and study in winter."

What did you study?

"I studied at medical school for 2 years and I stopped because of the war ... and then I had to come here."

5. What was the biggest difficulty upon arriving?

"Well, I cannot say like difficult things – different things. Things were very different. The culture was very different. You have to live by yourself, no family, no friends, no ... all these things, you know."

And the language?

"The language was the difficulty ... But as Portuguese people, a lot of them do speak English, so ..."

How did you learn English?

"Back in school and then I worked in Greece. I used to work with Safe the Children International as an interpreter."

6. How integrated do you feel in Portugal and in Lisbon?

(not asked)

7. Do you feel welcome in Portugal?

"Yes, I do! Thanks to be! That's for sure! Because the Portuguese people are very natural, very simple, they are welcoming people and very hospitable. I have been to many countries. I was talking about this today with Francisca, that Portuguese people are very welcoming people and very nice. I didn't feel any racism here in Portugal – zero. Even when I came here, in the first months I didn't know any Portuguese. I used to go to the Finanças, Social Security, ... (these places are normally very 'difícil') but they were very, very helpful (offered help in English and French). And then quickly, quickly I started learning. I learned in 1 year. I mean, if you do these things, you learn any other language – even Chinese. You go to China, you change your music, your

phone, you hear, you listen. If you have Chinese friends – you gonna learn. If you go to China and you have Portuguese friends for example – you gonna learn Portuguese, you are not going to learn Chinese. Especially, nice people make you love the country.” (Told us about an experience with an old Portuguese lady, who helped him once).

8. Do you usually interact with Portuguese people outside of Mezze?

Do you have many Portuguese friends?

“Yes, I do. Basically, that was one of the helps I had to learn Portuguese. I changed my phone language to Portuguese, music – Portuguese, TV & news – Portuguese, friends – Portuguese, and I learned Portuguese. Because if I had continued with Arabic friends, I would speak Arabic with them all the time of course, or English, and then: no Portuguese. Like my brother, my brother has this problem. He has only immigrant friends. So, he speaks English, Arabic, no Portuguese.”

Interview with Participant 11 (Mezze employee)

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler
Interviewee: Participant 11
Date: October 8, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was originally conducted in Arabic with another refugee translating.

General information on Participant 11:

Age: N/A
Gender: Female
Nationality: Syria

1. When did you arrive in Portugal?

"3 years ago."

2. Why did you decide to leave your country? Why Portugal?

"Immigration plan; didn't choose."

3. Did you arrive alone or with your family?

"Alone"

4. What are your professional background and former career? Last job before coming to Portugal?

"Didn't work before."

5. What was the biggest difficulty upon arriving?

"Language. It's hard to explain what I want. I want to ask for information about something and I'm not able to."

6. How integrated do you feel in Portugal and in Lisbon?

"Yes, thank God. This is the most important thing here in Portugal. What makes me get out of the house and work every day is that I feel integrated."

7. Do you feel welcome in Portugal?

Didn't answer

8. Do you usually interact with Portuguese people outside of Mezze?

"I have many Portuguese friends outside Mezze."

Interview with Participant 12 (Mezze employee)

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler
Interviewee: Participant 12
Date: October 8, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was originally conducted in English.

General information on Participant 12:

Age: 33
Gender: Male
Nationality: Egypt

1. When did you arrive in Portugal?

"I and a half year ago."

2. Why did you decide to leave your country? Why Portugal?

"I choose Portugal, there was a friend here who told me to come that were job opportunities to legalize my situation."

3. Did you arrive alone or with your family?

"Alone but I met my friend who stayed here a couple of months and then moved to Prague."

4. What are your professional background and former career? Last job before coming to Portugal?

"Never worked before coming to Portugal, I was studying in Egypt at the university, second year of Law. Then I moved to Italy and I stayed a while there with my brother."

5. What was the biggest difficulty upon arriving?

"To find a place to stay, it is hard to find good places without a salary. Also getting health insurance has been difficult for me, I had to go there at the offices many times, it was complicated. The language has not been a problem, two months ago I started to go to classes and now I try to practice more also at Mezze. I'm not yet good, but I understand. I already knew English and Dutch, that I studied in Egypt."

6. How integrated do you feel in Portugal and in Lisbon?

"Yes, I feel integrated but not too much. The language is important to integrate, and I miss having more Portuguese friends that can teach me the culture."

7. Do you feel welcome in Portugal?

"Yes yes...70% let's say"

8. Do you usually interact with Portuguese people outside of Mezze?

"Yes, I have some friends from Portugal."

Interview with Participant 13 (Mezze employee)

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler
Interviewee: Participant 13
Date: October 8, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was originally conducted in Portuguese.

General information on Participant 13:

Age: 50
Gender: Female
Nationality: Syria

1. When did you arrive in Portugal?

4 years ago, 2016 in.

2. Why did you decide to leave your country? Why Portugal?

I left my country due to the war in my country. Did not choose Portugal, I was redirected to Portugal in Greece.

3. Did you arrive alone or with your family?

I came with my two kids. The rest of my family remained in Syria.

4. What are your professional background and former career? Last job before coming to Portugal?

I have never worked before, Mezze was my first job.

5. What was the biggest difficulty upon arriving?

The biggest challenge faced was the boat ride, it was scary.

6. How integrated do you feel in Portugal and in Lisbon?

Yes, I feel integrated in Portugal.

7. Do you feel welcome in Portugal?

Not asked

8. Do you usually interact with Portuguese people outside of Mezze?

Mostly with people from the organizations that helped me at the arrival in Portugal. I don't know many Portuguese people otherwise. My kids, on the other hand, have Portuguese friends and speak Portuguese well.

Interview with Participant 14 (Mezze employee)

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler
Interviewee: Participant 14
Date: October 8, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was originally conducted in English.

General information on Participant 14:

Age: 31
Gender: Female
Nationality: Iraq

1. When did you arrive in Portugal?

"It's gonna be 4 years in April."

2. Why did you decide to leave your country? Why Portugal?

"I had a long-distance relationship with a Portuguese guy, and I traveled because we agreed to live together."

3. Did you arrive alone or with your family?

"I came alone, but I have my whole family still in Iraq."

4. What are your professional background and former career? Last job before coming to Portugal?

"I am an electrical engineer, I worked for 4 years in Iraq. Then I tried to work for a tourism company to do tours when I was single and with no kids, but it didn't work because of the family. Then when I had a son, I left everything, my career too to come to Portugal."

5. What was the biggest difficulty upon arriving?

"The language! I didn't know anything about Portuguese. Now I'm trying to find classes. What I know of Portuguese is thanks to Portuguese music for children. It is very effective to learn..."

"I have learnt English in Iraq, especially through movies, music, tv, etc."

6. How integrated do you feel in Portugal and in Lisbon?

"You will always feel like a stranger. But not because of Portuguese, but because you always miss your family. It's true that I have here my partner's family, and for example, during the weekend I have to work because my free days are Monday and Tuesday, but during the weekend there is no school, but I can leave my son to his grandmother here, and it feels like having my mother here. But when I'm sad I call my mother, not my partner's mother. It's not the same..."

"The culture of Portuguese and Arabic is not different. The only difference is that Portuguese people need war to understand how precious is their peace! They have always a mental war, always making simple situations complicated, dramatic, and dangerous."

7. Do you feel welcome in Portugal?

(not answered)

8. Do you usually interact with Portuguese people outside of Mezze?

"The family of my partner is Portuguese, so I'm part of a Portuguese family. I have Portuguese friends and Arabic too. But when I have to talk about something particular, I prefer the Arabic ones, because we have lived similar experiences, and we are closer, like sisters."

Interview with Participant 15

Interviewer: Gudrun Drexler
Interviewee: Participant 15 (Refugee; Contact established through CRESCER)
Date: December 20, 2020
Form: semi-structured

The following interview was originally conducted in English.

General information on Participant 15:

Age: 26
Gender: Male
Nationality: Iraq

1. When did you arrive in Portugal?

I have been here for almost 2 years, I arrived here in 2019.

2. Did you choose to go to Portugal?

To be honest, I didn't choose. The United Nations assigned me to Portugal. We were forced, but now we appreciate that we came.

3. Did you arrive alone or with your family?

With my friend.

4. Do you live alone or with someone else?

not asked

5. What are your professional background and former career? Last job before coming to Portugal? And have you already got a job here? If yes, which one?

I'm working in Teleperformance and a Facebook project. I've been working for 1 year now. It was hard to find a job. You have to have the language here in Portugal – at least English – to find a job. My friend doesn't work right now, because he doesn't speak any language except for the Arabic language. It's difficult for him. Actually, my Arabic language supported me a bit. Because in Teleperformance I was working with some projects that needed an employee who speaks it natively. And CRESCER supported me, helped me to apply for them. They accepted.

Here, I'm working, trying to study. But it's difficult now to study because they asked me now to make an exam in Portuguese and I have no idea of Portuguese. I can only say 'Bom dia' and that's it. For now, it's difficult. I was studying in my country. I finished high school, then I applied for university but because of the situation, I wouldn't take the scholarship. It was difficult to take it.

6. What was the biggest difficulty/challenge upon arriving?

Actually, the program, because when you come to Portugal, you don't know anyone and you cannot work. And they were giving us salaries, it was really difficult to live with it. It was 150€. You can take this money and live with it for a month. It was difficult in the beginning but when I started work, things got easy. Now I'm comfortable. (Smiles)

7. How are you learning or how have you learned the local language?

I went to 2 language courses but the program that they gave us to study was something where you cannot learn anything with it. They started from 'high words' and it was difficult to understand. So, I quit. The words are so similar. When they talk, you cannot recognize the word. Really hard ...

8. Do you feel like a part of the community in Portugal and Lisbon?

Actually, yes! They are not racist. They are doing something that makes us feel in our country. They are nice people.

9. Do you feel welcome in Portugal?

Yes!

10. Do you usually interact with Portuguese people or do you prefer to socialize within your ethnic community?

My friends are from other nationalities because I'm working with different nationalities in the company. So, my friends are at the same time, my co-workers. They are not Portuguese. Some of them are from Arabic countries, some of them from Europe, some from the United States.

11. What is the thing you miss the most from your home country?

My mom. She is still in Iraq.

12. Do you plan to go back to your country or move to another one in the nearest future (next 5 years)

Actually, I cannot go back to my country because I'm a politic refugee. If I go to my country, it is impossible to come out of it again. So, I will not go there.

13. Do you feel that you have to change/leave (parts of) your culture behind in order to fit into the Portuguese society?

Actually, no, not that much. Nothing changed.

14. Are you curious to learn more about the Portuguese culture? / Do you want to be part of the Portuguese society?

Yes.

15. What do you value the most about Portugal?

The people here, they are very nice. The food, the fish here is very good. The culture and Lisbon, I like the Old Town.

16. Is there something you don't like about Portugal?

Now, I'm trying to find a house to rent. It's really difficult because they are asking for a lot of things: Someone that will make them assure that I will pay the rent, a contract, IRS (=Personal Income Tax). That's the thing that makes it difficult to find a house to live. And the prices are too high. They are always asking for a fiador. I don't know one to be honest. They need a Portuguese one and working and make them feel guaranteed. Where can I find someone like this? It's really hard.